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ABSTRACT

This report examines the major trends in women's employment and unemployment over the past two decades in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries. Employment and unemployment trends in the labor force by sex are first considered. The report next examines the growth of the female labor supply and the trends in the labor force participation of women with an analysis of the factors responsible for these developments. It then analyzes the growth of the demand for female labor sector by sector and the development of part-time work, short-term and casual employment, the impact of technological change, and male and female earnings differentials as they have characterized female employment trends. On the basis of these developments, which are reviewed on the two sides of the labor market, the report examines in a comparative way the movements over conjunctural cycles of male and female unemployment and the reasons for its development. Twenty-three tables are included. (YLB)

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THE EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

IN OECD COUNTRIES

BY
LIBA PAUKERT

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- to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in Member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus to contribute to the development of the world economy;
- to contribute to sound economic expansion in Member as well as non-member countries in the process of economic development; and
- to contribute to the expansion of world trade on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations.

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The last two decades have witnessed substantial changes in the pattern of women's participation in the labour markets of Member countries. Participation of women has continued to increase in all countries, although the level of their participation varies markedly from country to country. The years of low economic growth and high unemployment differentially affected the position of men and women in labour markets and has led to sharp increases particularly in the unemployment of girls and young women. Generally, the participation rates of men in total have declined while the participation rates of women have continued to grow. Unemployment rates for women have been traditionally higher than for men, due in considerable part to the growth of the female labour supply and the pattern of their participation in labour markets. In recent years, however, in some countries the unemployment rates of women have been below those of males as recession and structural change have reduced employment in many manufacturing industries characterised by the employment of men.

This report, which was prepared for the OECD's Working Party on the Role of Women in the Economy, examines in depth these and related developments over the past two decades with emphasis on trends since the first oil shock in the mid-seventies.

The report first examines the growth of the female labour supply and the trends in the labour force participation of women with an analysis of the factors responsible for these developments. It next analyses the growth of the demand for female labour sector by sector and the development of part-time work, short-term and casual employment, the impact of technological change and male and female earnings differentials as they have characterised female employment trends. On the basis of these developments which are reviewed on the two sides of the labour market, the report examines in a comparative way the movements over conjunctural cycles of male and female unemployment and the reasons for its development.

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I

INTRODUCTION

In 1982 the OECD countries counted about twelve million unemployed women -- a figure giving rise to much concern from the economic and social point of view, particularly when compared with the much smaller number (about two and a half million) out of work in 1960. That year the unemployment rate for females was the same as for men (2.8); since then it has increased considerably faster, as Table I shows.

Table I

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY SEX, IN GROUPS OF OECD COUNTRIES, 1960-1981

	1960			1970			1980			1981		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
OECD total a)	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.5	3.4	5.6	5.1	6.5	6.6	6.1	7.3
North America	5.5	5.3	5.7	4.8	4.2	5.9	7.1	6.8	7.5	7.5	7.2	7.9
OECD Europe a)	1.9	2.0	1.8	2.1	1.9	2.6	5.8	4.9	7.3	7.5	6.7	8.9
Australia New Zealand	1.0	0.6	2.0	1.2	0.8	2.0	5.4	4.5	7.0	5.4	4.5	6.9
Japan	1.1	0.9	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.1

T: total; M: male; F: female

a) Excluding Iceland and Turkey.

Source: OECD Labour Force Statistics.

But the level of female unemployment and its spectacular rise is only one aspect of the dramatic global development of female participation in the labour market over the last 30 years. While the number of economically active men in OECD countries increased by 25 per cent over this period, the comparable figure for women was 74 per cent. Women, of course, started from a much lower base than men; but even in the 1950s their absolute increase in the labour force was higher. The same was true in the 60s and even more so in the 70s (Table II and Figure 1).

The actual figures are these. The total labour force of OECD countries increased by 28 million in the 1950s, by 30 million in the 1960s and by 43 million in the 1970s. In the first two decades women's contribution to the increase was slightly more than half -- 51.7 and 51.2 per cent -- whereas in the last decade it amounted to 63.2 per cent. By 1980 there were 136 million economically active women in the OECD countries out of a total active population of 351 million. This represents a share of 38.7 per cent -- in 1950 it was 31.4.

The impact and consequences of this major revelation in the labour market began to be appreciated in the mid-1970s, when it became evident that aggregate female participation rates continued to rise in spite of the recession which affected most OECD countries at that time (1). It appeared clearly then that the increasing attachment of women to the labour market was a permanent feature of the economic and social scene. The reaction of female labour to cyclical changes no longer corresponded to established patterns, where for example a certain increase in employment would be offset by a similar decrease in unemployment or vice-versa. The massive influx of women into the labour force manifested itself by a simultaneous growth of the number of women employed and of the number of unemployed, i.e. by an increase in employment and in unemployment rates.

Before starting to analyse the statistical evidence, one must appreciate that the increase in female employment does not, by itself, imply a marked strengthening of women's position in the labour market, which remains weak in most other aspects but rising numbers. It is the less desirable, and the marginal jobs in most sectors that tend to be held by women.

Admittedly, growing numbers of women have been entering jobs traditionally considered as "male" in recent years, but, for a series of reasons, a large proportion of women continued to limit their occupational choices. The rise in women's employment opportunities -- to the extent that it materialised -- has had relatively little impact on the long-established employment pattern characterised by a high concentration of women in a relatively small number of occupations, mainly of lesser skill, lower status and commanding low wages (2).

While the purpose of this study is to examine the major trends in women's employment and unemployment in recent years,

problems such as employment status, changes in occupational structure, relative pay levels, social security and taxation issues, and employment policies are, no doubt, closely related with labour force trends. However, because of their complexity they are outside the scope of the present analysis.

Table II

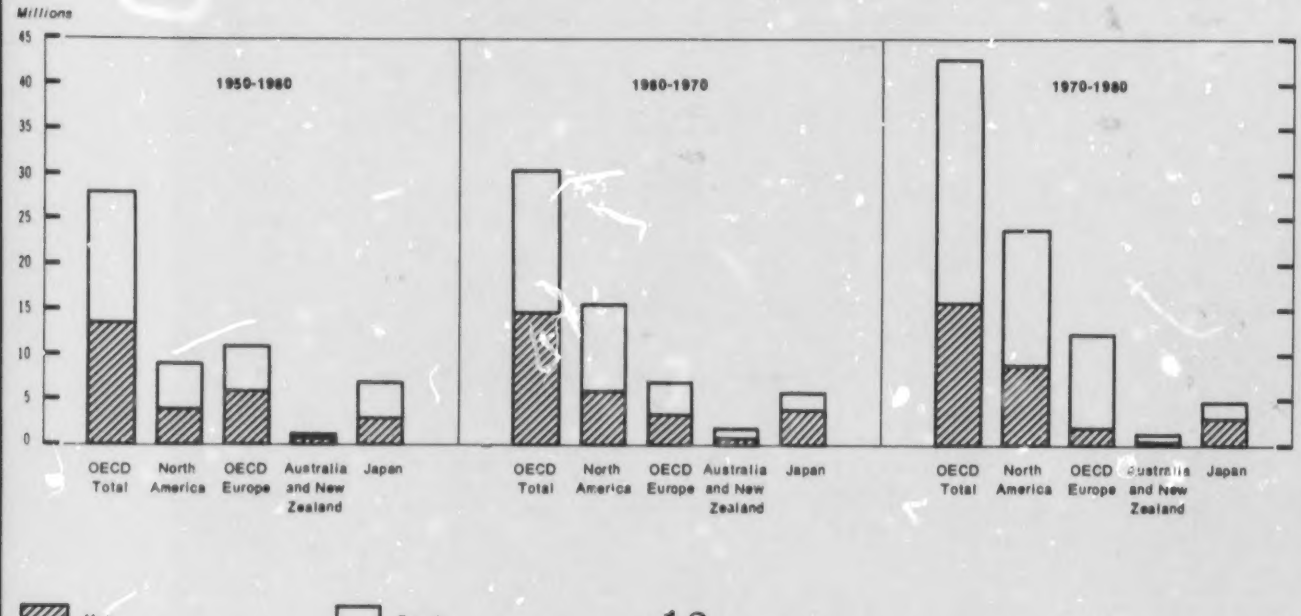
TRENDS AND STRUCTURE OF LABOUR FORCE CHANGES BY SEX IN OECD COUNTRIES, 1950-1980

		1950-60		1960-70		1970-81	
		Percentage change	Contribution of M+F to change	Percentage change	Contribution of M+F to change	Percentage change	Contribution of M+F to change
OECD total	T	11.2	100.0	11.0	100.0	15.6	100.0
	M	7.9	48.3	8.0	48.8	8.7	36.2
	F	18.5	51.7	16.8	51.2	28.2	63.8
of which:							
North America	T	13.5	100.0	20.0	100.0	30.9	100.0
	M	8.0	42.9	11.7	39.9	19.7	40.2
	F	27.2	57.1	37.9	60.1	50.1	59.8
OECD Europe	T	7.8	100.0	4.8	100.0	6.7	100.0
	M	5.9	52.3	3.5	49.6	0.4	3.6
	F	11.9	47.7	7.4	50.4	19.4	96.4
Australia and New Zealand	T	19.2	100.0	32.0	100.0	22.5	100.0
	M	16.4	66.1	19.5	45.9	14.2	43.2
	F	28.7	33.9	70.8	54.1	40.0	56.8
Japan	T	18.8	100.0	13.3	100.0	10.8	100.0
	M	14.4	47.2	16.1	71.7	11.8	66.6
	F	25.8	52.8	9.3	28.3	9.1	33.4

T: total; M: male; F: female

Sources: Demographic Trends 1950-1990, OECD, 1979; and Labour Force Statistics, 1981.

Figure 1 **CONTRIBUTION OF MEN AND WOMEN TO LABOUR FORCE CHANGES IN OECD COUNTRIES, 1950-1980**



Source : OECD *Labour Force Statistics*.

II

TRENDS IN THE LABOUR FORCE: EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT BY SEX

As stated in an earlier OECD study, the last decade has seen a "considerable rise in the number of women in the labour force of most Member countries at the same time as economic growth has slowed down and overall unemployment has risen ... Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that unemployment among women has gone up. What is, perhaps, more significant is the absorption of very large numbers of women into employment ... In most OECD countries the overwhelming majority of the increase in the female labour force has been absorbed into employment." (3)

To illustrate this phenomenon we present, side by side in Table III, average annual rates of growth of male and female labour forces, employment and unemployment in the last two decades. Here it is clear that female employment increased in both decades considerably more than male employment. In the 1960s, however, female unemployment increased, while male unemployment declined, and in the 1970s both male and female unemployment generally increased, but overall female unemployment increased more. During the 1970s, the female labour force grew on the average about four times faster than the male labour force, but female employment grew six times faster than male employment. Relatively the smallest difference was between the average growth of unemployment which, however, increased very steeply. Male unemployment rose at 8.2 per cent a year and female unemployment at 9.4 per cent, i.e. 15 per cent faster, on average.

The increase of the female labour force and the absorption of women into employment was remarkable, particularly in North America where, in addition, the male labour force has also increased. In Europe a part of the increase of female labour supply compensated for a decline in male labour supply and the absorption of women into employment should have been comparatively easier. However, the contribution of women to the total net unemployment increase was higher in Europe than in North America, as the Table indicates, and as illustrated in Figure 2.

If instead of total numbers we consider unemployment rates, which show unemployment in proportion to the total male or female labour force, and which thus provide a more adequate measure of

the incidence of unemployment, the picture looks considerably worse for women than for men, particularly in certain countries, as shown in Tables I and XIX.

This global presentation, however, needs some qualification. First, the official statistics used do not include unrecorded or hidden unemployment. Secondly they do not reveal the fact that, as discussed later, a considerable proportion of female employment is on a part-time basis.

Table III

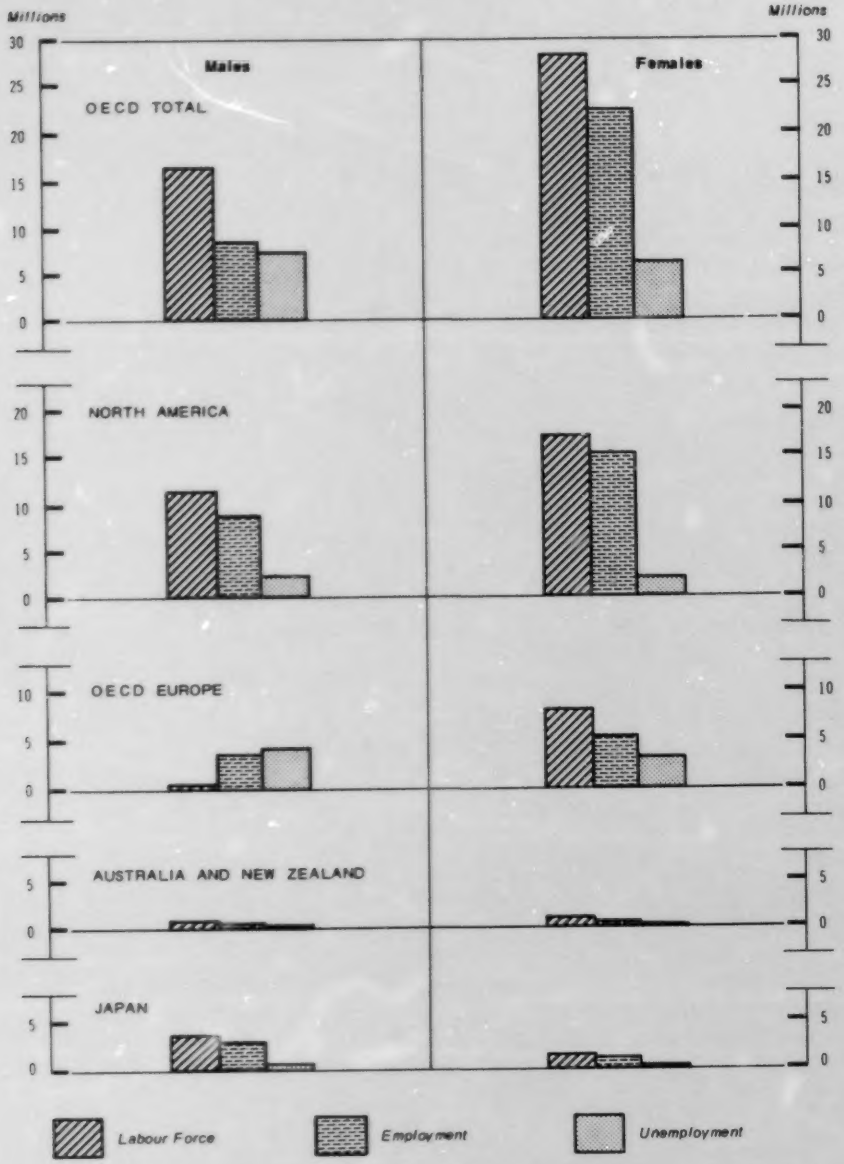
AVERAGE ANNUAL RATES OF CHANGE OF LABOUR FORCE, EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN OECD COUNTRIES, 1960-1981[a]

	Labour force			Employment			Unemployment		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1960-1970									
OECD total	1.0	0.7	1.6	1.0	0.8	1.5	1.0	- 0.4	3.5
North America	1.8	1.1	3.3	1.9	1.2	3.3	0.6	- 1.2	3.5
OECD Europe	0.4	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.6	1.5	- 0.1	4.6
Australia and New Zealand	2.8	1.8	5.5	2.8	1.8	5.5	5.2	5.1	5.3
Japan	1.3	1.5	0.9	1.3	1.5	0.9	1.7	4.3	- 1.7
1970-1980									
OECD total	1.2	0.6	2.3	0.9	0.3	2.0	8.7	8.1	9.5
North America	2.3	1.3	3.8	2.0	1.0	3.7	6.4	6.4	6.4
OECD Europe	0.5	-0.1	1.7	0.1	-0.4	1.2	11.5	10.1	13.3
Australia and New Zealand	1.9	1.3	3.2	1.5	0.9	2.6	18.3	19.6	17.1
Japan	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.7	6.8	6.4	7.4
1970-1973									
OECD total	1.2	0.7	2.0	1.1	0.6	1.9	4.1	2.4	6.3
North America	2.1	1.4	3.3	2.1	1.4	3.2	1.8	- 0.2	4.2
OECD Europe	0.5	-0.1	1.7	0.3	-0.2	1.5	7.1	5.2	9.9
Australia and New Zealand	2.3	1.7	3.5	2.2	1.6	3.4	10.9	11.7	10.1
Japan	1.1	1.6	0.4	1.1	1.5	0.3	4.8	5.0	4.6
1973-1975									
OECD total	1.0	0.4	1.9	-0.1	-0.6	0.9	29.7	32.8	25.8
North America	2.2	1.2	3.8	0.4	-0.6	2.0	33.0	37.3	28.0
OECD Europe	0.4	-0.3	1.8	-0.3	-1.0	1.0	25.8	28.4	22.3
Australia and New Zealand	2.2	1.3	4.0	1.0	0.4	2.3	60.8	63.1	58.7
Japan	-0.0	0.9	-1.5	-0.3	0.5	-1.7	21.3	22.5	19.0
1975-1978									
OECD total	1.4	0.7	2.8	1.4	0.7	2.6	1.7	- 0.8	4.9
North America	2.7	1.6	4.3	3.4	2.4	5.0	- 6.5	- 9.4	- 3.1
OECD Europe	0.6	-0.0	1.7	0.1	-0.3	1.0	10.3	7.0	14.8
Australia and New Zealand	1.3	0.6	2.6	0.7	-0.1	2.2	14.0	18.6	9.1
Japan	1.3	0.7	2.3	1.2	0.6	2.2	7.4	7.1	8.1
1979									
OECD total	1.4	0.6	2.6	1.4	0.7	2.6	0.3	- 1.5	2.4
North America	2.5	1.6	3.7	2.8	1.8	4.1	- 2.2	- 2.3	- 2.1
OECD Europe	0.7	-0.2	2.1	0.5	-0.2	1.8	3.8	1.1	6.9
Australia and New Zealand	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.6	2.1	0.7	0.3	- 6.3	8.6
Japan	1.2	0.9	1.6	1.3	1.1	1.7	- 5.6	- 8.6	0.0
1980									
OECD total	1.2	0.7	1.9	0.4	-0.2	1.5	14.9	20.4	8.8
North America	1.8	1.1	2.9	0.6	-0.7	2.4	22.3	33.6	10.4
OECD Europe	0.6	0.4	1.2	0.0	-0.3	0.6	11.5	14.4	8.2
Australia and New Zealand	2.8	1.8	4.7	2.9	1.8	5.0	1.3	1.4	1.1
Japan	1.0	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.2	- 2.6	- 4.1	0.0
1981									
OECD total	1.2	0.7	1.9	0.1	-0.4	0.9	18.3	12.1	15.3
North America	1.7	0.9	2.8	1.3	0.5	2.3	7.8	6.9	9.0
OECD Europe	0.7	0.4	1.3	-1.1	-1.5	-0.4	30.7	37.6	22.8
Australia and New Zealand	1.5	1.3	1.9	1.6	1.3	2.0	1.4	1.8	1.0
Japan	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.8	0.7	0.9	10.5	11.2	9.3

a. Excluding Iceland and Turkey

Source: OECD, Labour Force Statistics, various issues.

Figure 2 **NET ABSOLUTE CHANGE OF MALE AND FEMALE LABOUR FORCE, EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN OECD COUNTRIES[a], 1970-1981**



a. Excluding Iceland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Turkey.

Source : OECD *Labour Force Statistics*.

III

GROWTH OF THE FEMALE LABOUR SUPPLY

1. TRENDS IN FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The total growth of the labour force, to which (as we have seen) women contributed a very large share, has been determined by several factors. First, the increase in size of the working-age population, which was the result of past trends in fertility, mortality and migration, fertility trends having been marked by such phenomena as the post-war "baby-boom" and the subsequent steady decline in the number of children per family. The size of the labour force itself was determined by the proportion of the working-age population prepared to take paid employment, i.e. by labour-force participation rates. Trends in these rates were in their turn the result of two opposite movements: a general decline in male labour force participation and an increase in female participation (4).

In Europe, the most frequent pattern for male labour force participation rates was an almost uniform decline throughout the period under review, although certain fluctuations could be observed, particularly in Scandinavian countries. Female participation rates had a constantly rising trend in the great majority of countries. In a few, such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the increase was very rapid (even if, as mentioned earlier, a large proportion of female employment growth was part-time). In others, notably in Austria, Germany, Ireland and Switzerland, the overall increase was slow, interrupted by occasional declines.

In Canada, male labour force participation rates declined between 1950 and 1971 and then started to rise again, with an inflection in 1975-1976 and a levelling-off in the last few years. In the United States, male labour force participation rates kept declining until 1976, increased between 1977 and 1979, and declined again slightly in 1980 and 1981. Female participation rates, on the other hand, increased steadily throughout the period under review, both in Canada and in the United States.

In Australia and in New Zealand, male participation rates had a steadily declining trend and female participation rates

had a constantly rising trend, as in most countries of Europe.

In Japan, however, male activity rates increased in the 1950s and the 1960s, but remained almost constant in the 1970s, declining slightly in 1980 and 1981. Female activity rates increased from 1950 to 1970, declined from 1970 to 1975 and went up again in recent years, including 1980 and 1981, without reaching their 1970 level.

Cyclic sensitivity of female labour force participation. One of the interesting features of the rise in female labour force participation rates was its feeble reaction to recent cyclical fluctuations. During the 1974-1975 recession these rates continued to grow in the majority of countries, although there were exceptions such as Austria, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Spain and Switzerland. In 1980-1981, a decline occurred in only two countries, as far as available data indicate, namely Spain and the United Kingdom. Thus the discouraged worker effect seems to have been less strong among women in the 1980-1981 recession than during the first oil crisis, which supports the argument of women's rising labour force commitment.

It seems then, that a large number of women have now become sufficiently attached to the idea of a working career not to be easily discouraged when losing their job, and to remain in the labour force, or try entering it, even if market conditions look grim. This change in attitude is associated with the fact that earnings of married women have come to be regarded in a large number of families as permanent household income. Moreover, the rise in the number of female-headed households increased the proportion of women who, like men, have no option but to work.

In a number of OECD countries there has been more evidence in recent years of labour discouragement among men than among women. In Canada and in the United States, male labour force participation rates, which increased between 1976 and 1979, stopped growing or declined in 1980-1981. A reaction of male labour force participation to unemployment changes could also be observed in Finland, Norway and Sweden (5). Labour discouragement was widespread particularly among the young and in older age groups. The difficulty for young people to enter the labour force (leading in many cases to a continuation of education) and the early retirement schemes introduced in many countries were chiefly responsible for it. While young women were in an even more difficult position than young men as new labour entrants, early retirement schemes concerned men more than women, because relatively few women are still active after 55 years of age. These schemes are reported to have involved up to 2 per cent of the civilian labour force in industrialised countries in recent years (6).

Thus, it seems that the decline in labour force participation in response to rising unemployment has become age-related rather than sex-related: women's labour force attachment has

strengthened while early retirement schemes or the general lowering of working age have come to be used as measures against unemployment.

The question arises as to how many formerly inactive women started to seek employment during crisis periods in order to "make ends meet", when their husbands became unemployed. The existence of this reaction, generally referred to as the "additional worker effect", has been reported in several countries in connection with the recent male unemployment growth (7).

In many ways, this effect would appear as more characteristic of the present time than the discouraged worker effect, for reasons that are both institutional (entitlement to unemployment benefits) and psychological (the wider scope of social acceptance of women's work, as well as better education, would make many formerly non-working wives ready and able to seek employment if the family's financial situation left no other option). However, the final impact of the additional worker effect on labour force participation rates tends to be limited by the fact that the non-working population able to take employment is declining in relative importance.

In particular, non-working wives of unemployed husbands -- or more generally non-active women of working age in households where the main earner becomes unemployed -- represent a fraction of the female active population in industrialised countries today. For example, in the United States in mid-1981 non-active wives of unemployed husbands numbered about 600 thousand, which was low compared with the total female labour force of over 46 million. Even if 50 per cent of the wives with unemployed husbands had become economically active, the female labour force participation rate would have increased by a mere 0.3 per cent.

In comparison, the female population potentially concerned by the discouraged worker effect is much larger -- namely, all female unemployed, first-job seekers, potential first-job seekers among students deciding between work and further education, and a certain proportion of women not in the labour force who might want to re-enter it. As a result, the discouraged worker effect is likely to have a greater impact today, other things being equal, than the additional worker effect.

The long-term growth trend of female labour force participation had a strong enough autonomous impetus not to be patently influenced by the cyclical fluctuations of the last decade, at least in most countries. It was determined primarily by factors entirely independent of the labour market, mainly demographic factors and factors related to economic growth and social change.

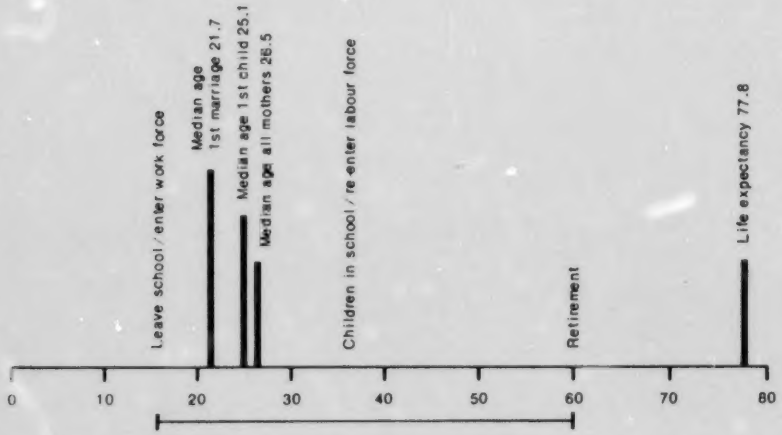
2. REASONS BEHIND RISING FEMALE PARTICIPATION

1) Demographic factors

Since the beginning of the century all industrialised countries experienced a series of deep demographic changes. Basically these changes consisted of a transition from a situation of high fertility and relatively high mortality to a new demographic balance characterised by low fertility and low mortality. This transition affected, in a very important way, the life cycle of women. A few generations ago a woman was frequently 40 years old at the birth of her last child and slowly approaching old age when the last of her (often many) children reached school age and she was freed from the most basic family obligations.

Today, given the decline in fertility rates in the vast majority of OECD countries, the number of children per family has decreased very considerably. In addition, women are increasingly able to concentrate the births of the children they desire between the age of 20 and 30 -- particularly between 25 and 30. As a result, when their youngest child reaches school age, they are typically about 35 years old and have 20-25 years of working career in front of them. Data from Australia illustrate this point (Figure 3).

Figure 3 **EXPECTED FEMALE LIFE PATTERN, AUSTRALIA, 1979**



Sources : Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Births* 1979 ABS. *Marriages* 1979
Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Deaths* 1979 ABS, unpublished data.

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Table IV shows that in Canada and in the United States about one child in four is now born to a mother over 30. In most countries of Europe the rate is somewhat higher, but has been following a fast declining trend (Table V). The increasing number of women who are freed from the care of pre-school children by the age of about 35 is an important factor in the rapid increase of female labour force participation in the middle-age groups which has been one of the most sizeable components in the growth of the female labour force in all OECD countries in the recent years.

Table IV

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FERTILITY OCCURRING TO MOTHERS OVER 30 YEARS OF AGE, IN SELECTED OECD COUNTRIES, 1979-80

Canada	26
United States	23
Austria	22
Belgium	22
Denmark	23
Finland	31
France	24
Germany	26
Greece	24
Ireland	46
Italy	31
Netherlands	27
Norway	26
Spain	36
Sweden	30
Switzerland	31
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	26

Source: UN ECE, Nuptiality and fertility trends in ECE countries (forthcoming study).

For the earliest period shown, the curve of female labour-force participation is often characterised by a constantly declining trend from the highest level corresponding to the age group of 15-19, forming a near plateau for the ages 35-54, and then falling off again rapidly. This was typically the case of Germany in 1950, of Belgium and Australia in 1947, of the United Kingdom and New Zealand in 1951 and of the Netherlands in 1960. In later years, as labour force participation in the middle-age groups, and particularly between the ages of 35-54, started to rise (illustrating the tendency for women to return to the labour force after raising a family) the curve has become M-shaped. Particularly clear illustrations for this pattern are

Table V

DECLINE IN THE SHARE OF FERTILITY OCCURRING TO MOTHERS OVER 30, BETWEEN THE EARLY 1950s AND 1979-80, IN SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

	1950-1955	1979-1980
Denmark	32	23
Finland	41	31
France	34	24
Italy	46	31
Netherlands	52	27
Norway	42	26
Spain	49	36
Sweden	34	30
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	33	26

Source: As for Table IV, and UN ECE: The Economic Role of Women in the ECE Region, New York, 1980. Chapter 5.

the 1971 and 1979 curves in the United Kingdom, the 1962 curve in France, the 1960 curve in Finland, the 1970 curve in Sweden, the 1960 and 1970 curves in the United States.

In the most recent years, however, the two-peaked "M" curve has been replaced in some countries (particularly those with a high rate of female economic activity) by an inverted U-shape curve, resembling the activity curve of men, although remaining at a lower level. The 1975 activity curve of Finland and the 1979 and 1980 curves of Denmark and Sweden are the best illustration of this, although the curves of France and the United States seem to be developing in the same direction.

In some countries such as Belgium and Italy, where the female participation rate was low in the initial period, the curve has been pushed up in a more or less uniform fashion for all ages between 20 and 45, without the "M" shape having ever appeared.

In other countries with a generally low overall level of female economic activity (e.g. Ireland and the Netherlands) the female labour-force participation curve remains characterised by a high peak corresponding to the age group of 20-24, followed by a sharp decline, a plateau corresponding to the middle-age groups, and another sharp decline. However, this type of participation curve now appears to be an exception in industrialised countries. In the majority of OECD countries, the female labour-force participation curve has either the form of an "M" at a relatively high level or the form of a large inverted "U". This corresponds

FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY FIVE-YEAR AGE GROUPS
IN FOURTEEN COUNTRIES

Figure 4 AUSTRALIA

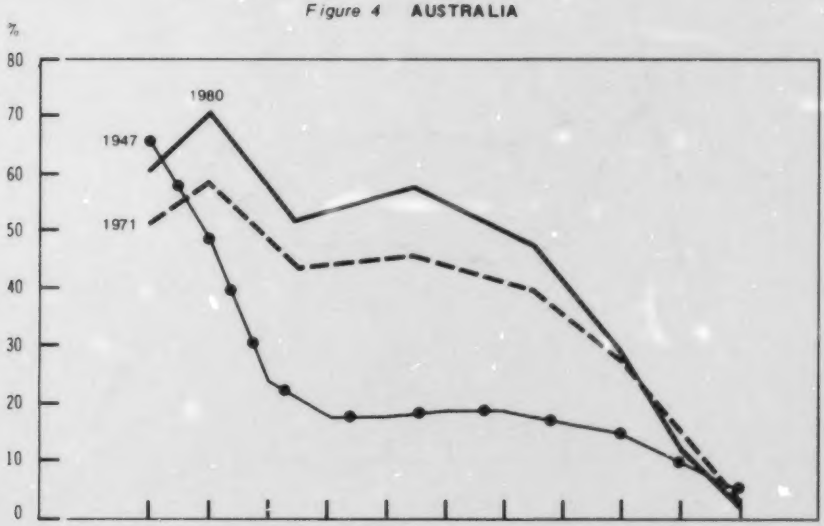


Figure 5 BELGIUM

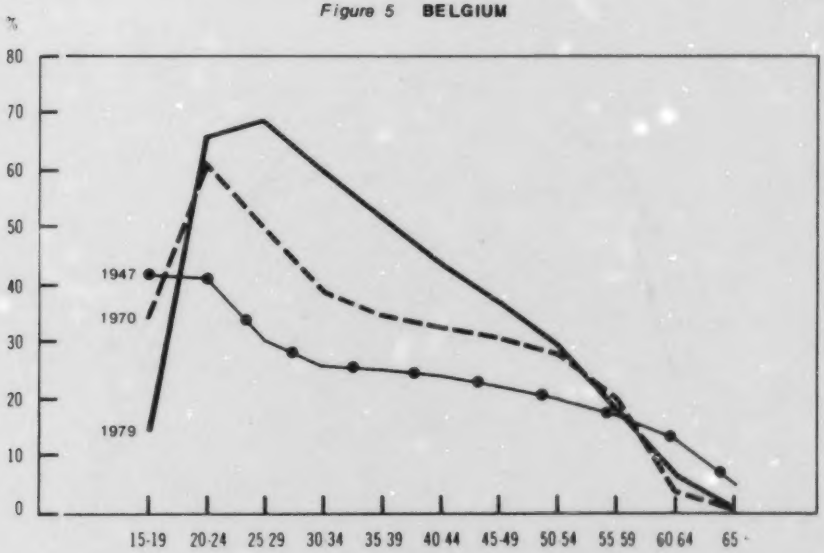


Figure 6 **DENMARK**

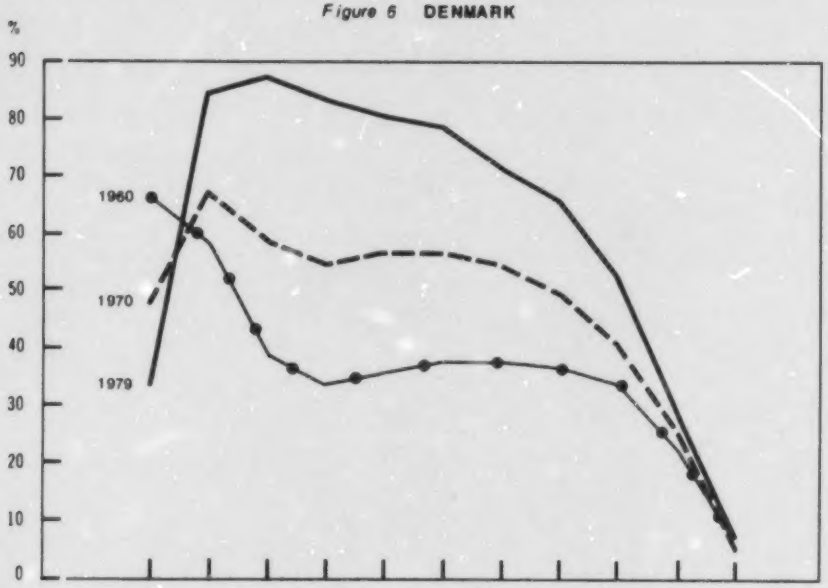


Figure 7 **FINLAND**

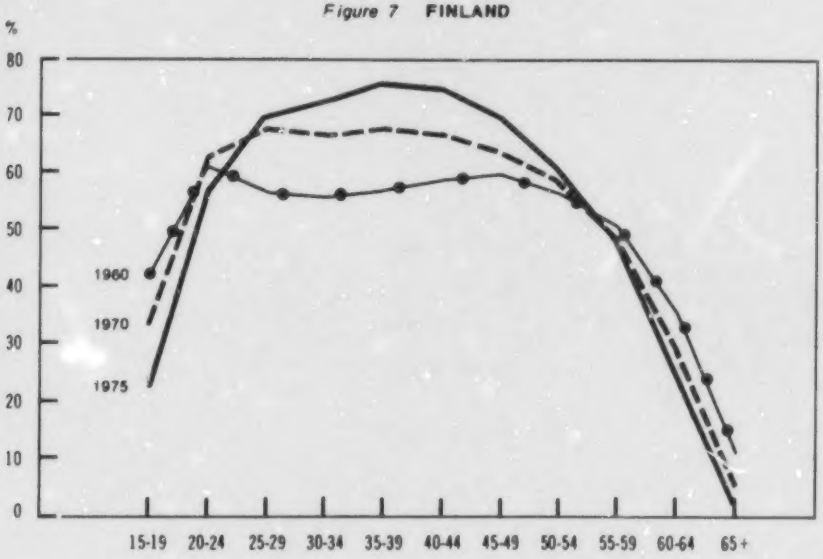
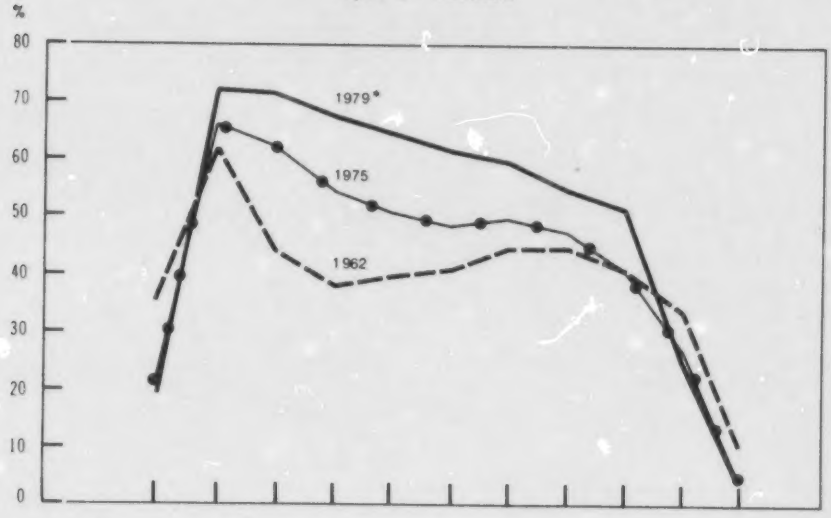


Figure 8 **FRANCE**



* Lowest age group 14-19.

Figure 9 **GERMANY**

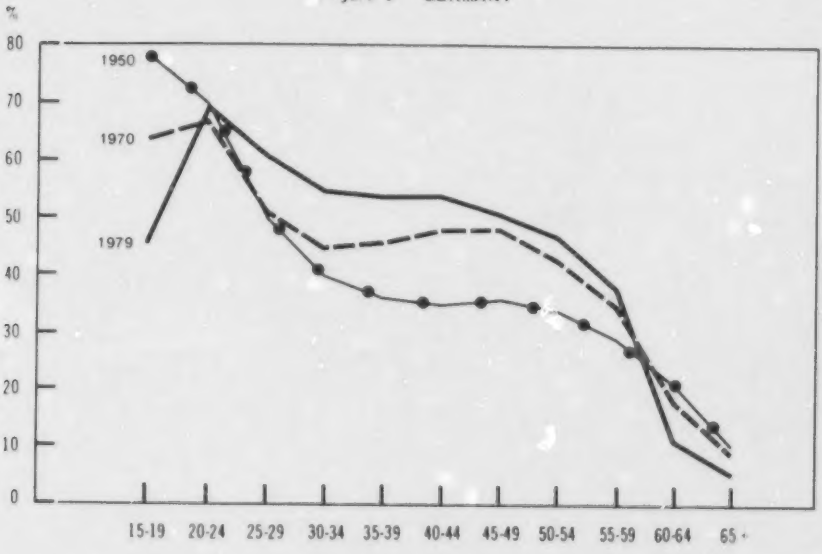


Figure 10 **JAPAN**

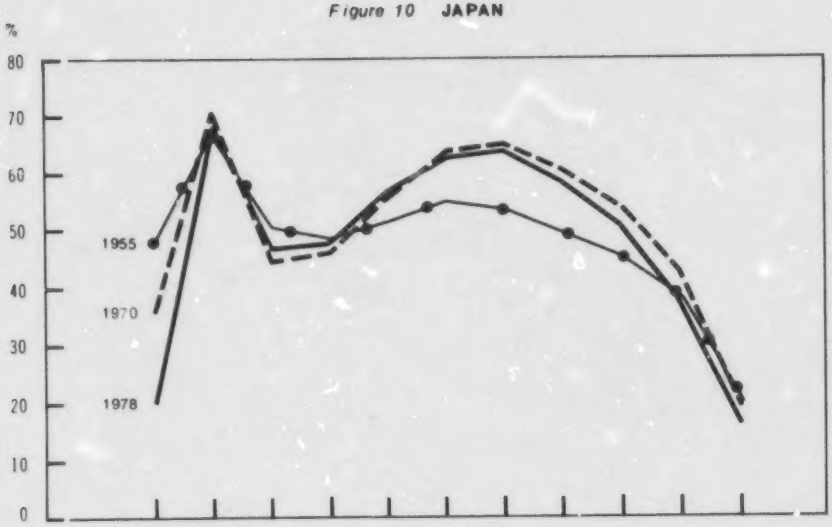
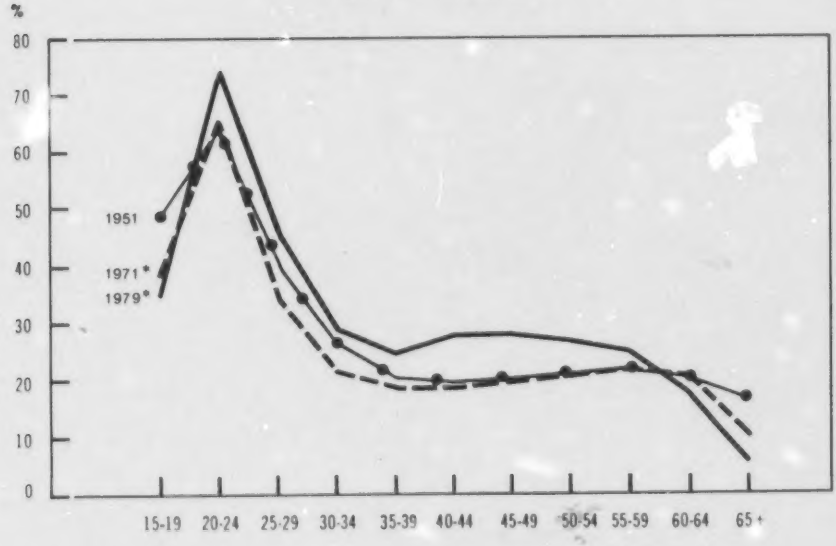
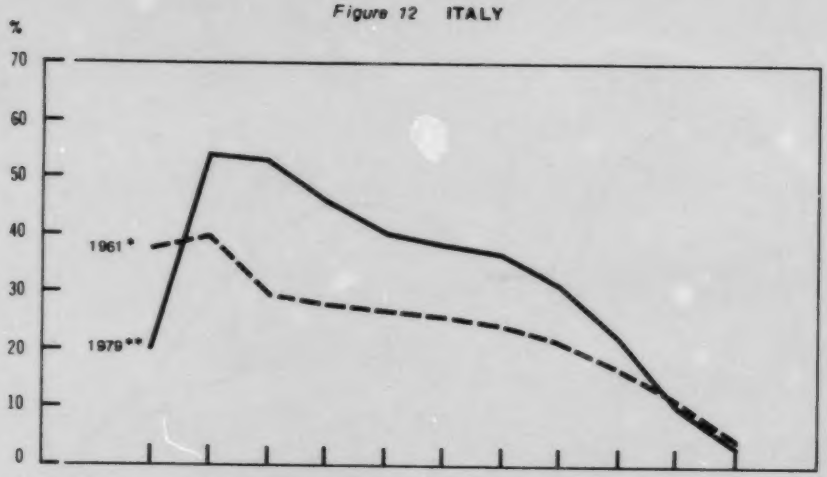


Figure 11 **IRELAND**



* Lowest age group 14-19.

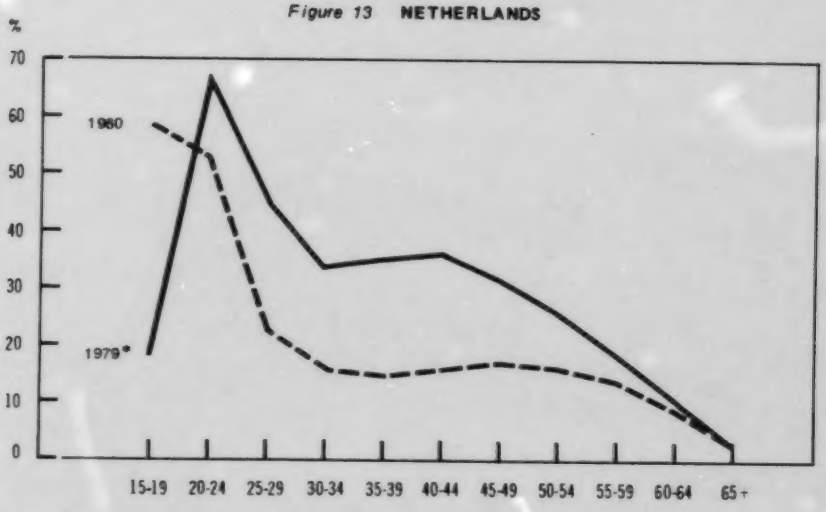
Figure 12 **ITALY**



* Middle age groups 35-44, 45-54.

** Lowest age group 14-19.

Figure 13 **NETHERLANDS**



* Lowest age group 14-19.

Figure 14 **NEW ZEALAND**

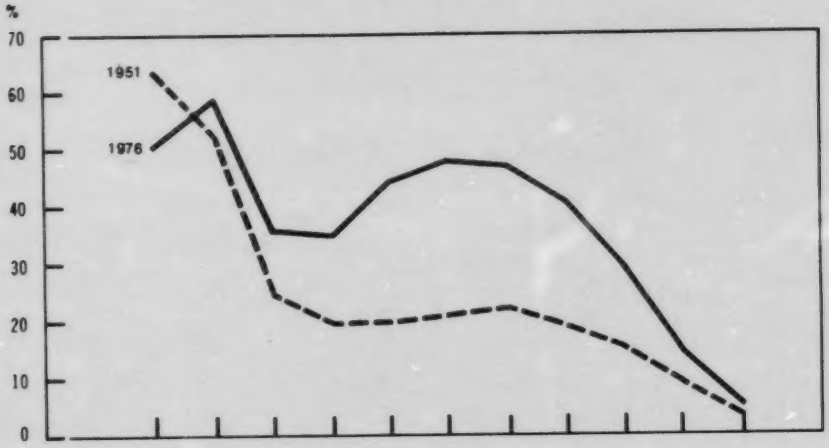
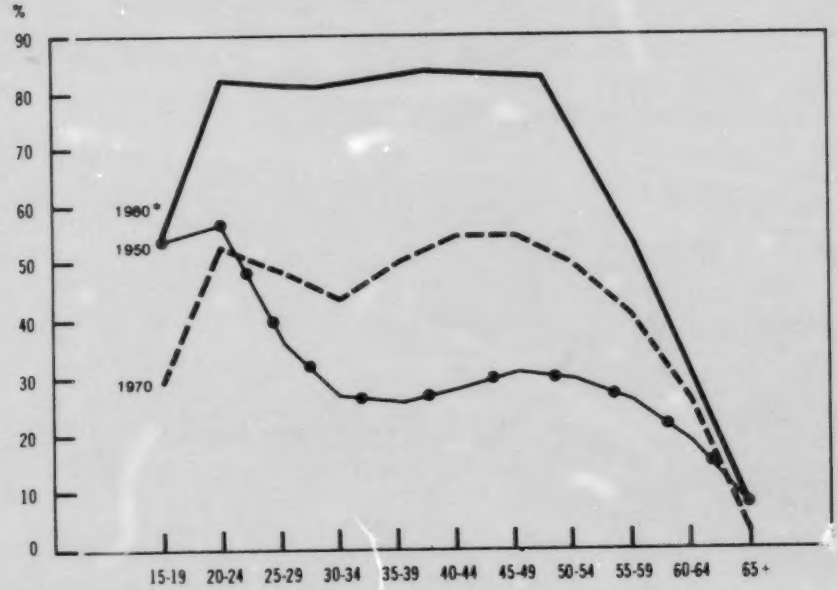
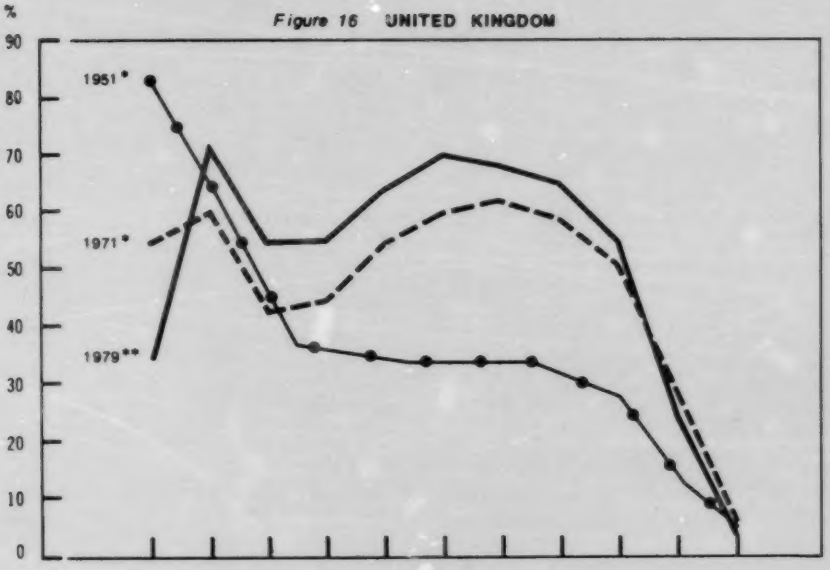


Figure 15 **SWEDEN**



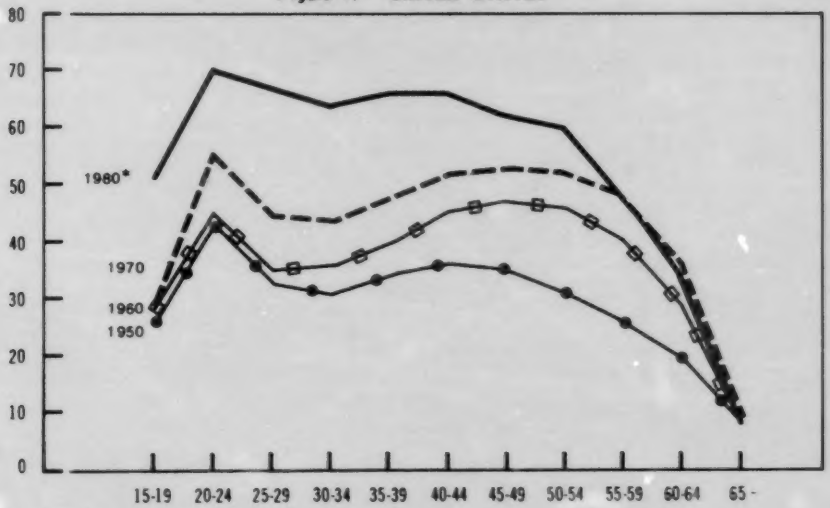
* Age groups : 16-19, 20-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74.

Figure 16 **UNITED KINGDOM**



* 1951 and 1971 data refer to England and Wales.
** 1979 - lowest age group 14-19.

Figure 17 **UNITED STATES**



* Lowest age group 16-19.

Note : The participation curves for 1979 and 1980 are based on official estimates or labour force surveys not on census data as are the curves for earlier years. They are not, therefore, strictly comparable.

Sources : OECD *Demographic Trends, 1950-1990* ; United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*, various issues ; ILO *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, various issues; and national statistics.

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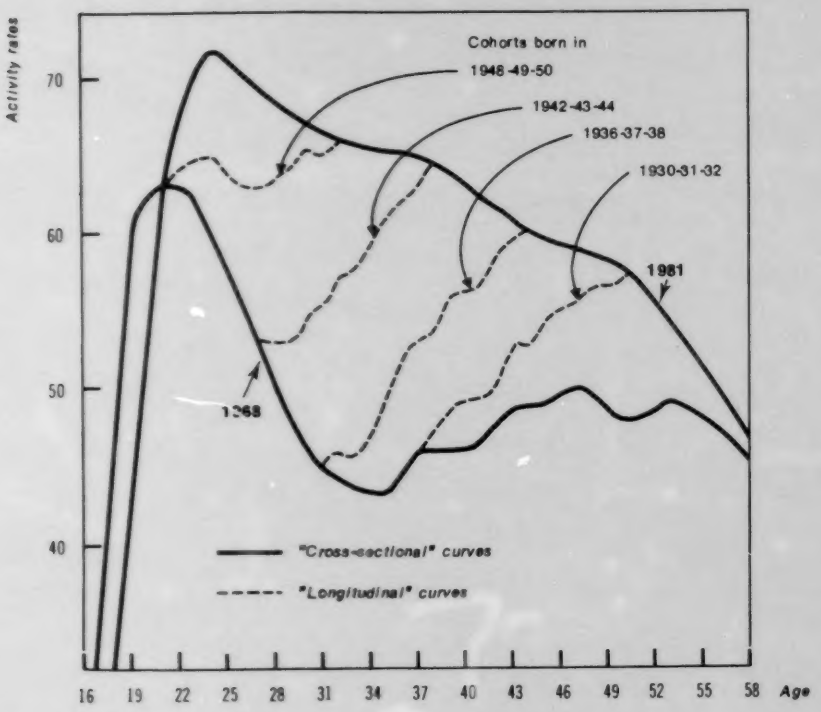
to a situation where an increasing proportion of women not only enter the labour force, but tend to remain there for a longer number of years than previously, and often without interruption for child-bearing.

The particular feature typical of women's working careers in the past, consisting in a more frequent passage from activity into inactivity and vice-versa than in the case of men, still persists, but the frequency of change has diminished. There is a distinct trend for them to stay in the labour force and have longer working careers than previously. This trend particularly concerns the younger generation. If, for instance, participation rates of the young age cohorts a decade or more ago are followed through successive labour surveys or censuses, their increasing propensity to remain in the labour force becomes clearly visible. At the same time, older age cohorts have a tendency to enter or re-enter the labour force, as illustrated on the example of France in Figure 18 (8).

Figure 18 **FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY AGE COHORTS IN FRANCE, 1968-1981**



Source : INED.

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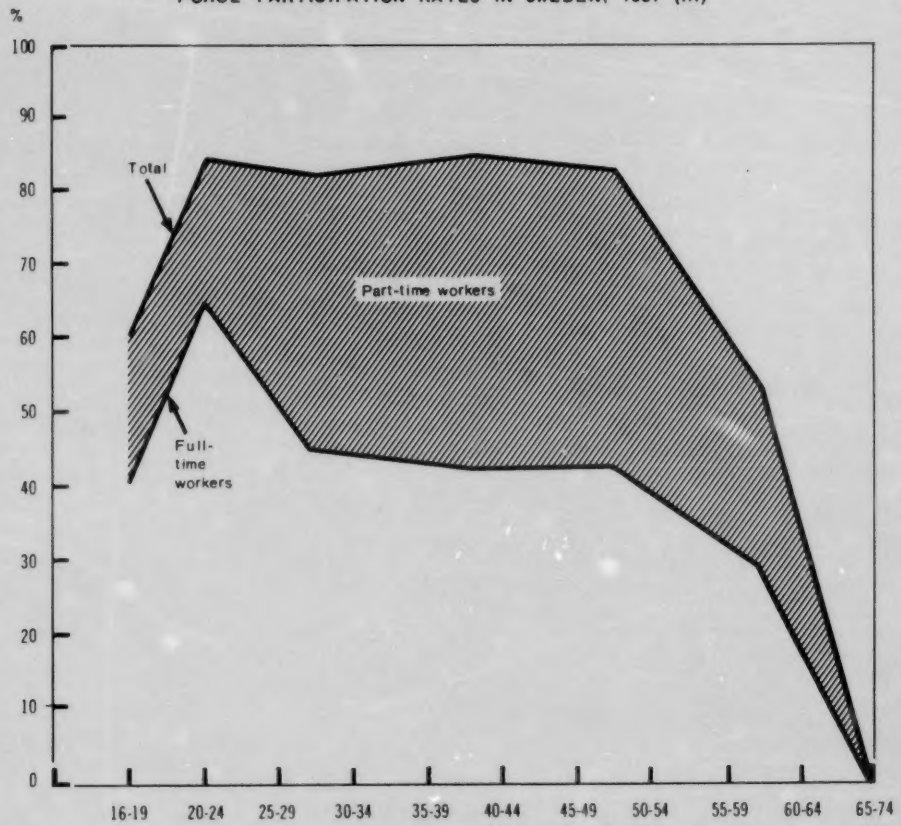
It is important to note that a fairly large proportion of the female labour force consists of part-time workers. Their share is high particularly in the middle-age groups as illustrated by Swedish data in Figure 19. While the majority of young women under 25 work full-time, the full-time participation rate declines quite sharply after 25 and the part-time participation rate rises in an almost symmetrical way. Part-time work is widespread among married women with dependent children, many of whom are thus able to combine work outside the home and childcare. Among married women over 25 in Sweden the number of part-time workers exceeds the number of full-time workers in every age group.

Figure 19 **TOTAL, FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES IN SWEDEN, 1981 (III)**



Source : Sweden, SCB, *Statistiska Meddelanden*, III / 1981.

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The transition from a low-level, uniformly-declining, female activity curve with the highest level corresponding to the youngest age groups, to an inverted U-shaped activity curve which is becoming typical of the present situation, suggests that while in the early period a large proportion of women worked only when they were young and still unmarried (and marriage for them meant the retirement from the labour force), at the present time marriage is no longer an obstacle to economic activity. In fact, participation rates of married women have been increasing considerably faster than participation rates of women in general, although a particularly high proportion of married women in the middle-age ranges work part-time.

Married women represent today about 60 per cent of the total female labour force of OECD countries -- 52 per cent in North America, 61 per cent in Europe taken as a whole and Australia, and 66 per cent in Japan (9). In some countries of Europe the share of married women in the female labour force is higher, e.g. in Belgium (71.6 per cent) and in the United Kingdom (66.5 per cent). However, in other countries the share remains relatively low. For instance, in Ireland married women account for about 30 per cent of the female workforce (10).

Nevertheless, participation rates for married women mostly remain below those for the unmarried although French data, for example, show that married women under 25 without children have higher participation rates than single women of the same age. Thus, the declining marriage rate and the recent tendency for the average age at first marriage to increase (after having declined for a number of years) are factors linked to rising female labour-force participation. Again, the rise in the divorce rate, characteristic of all industrialised countries in recent decades, has been another factor in the increasing female labour-force participation.

While marriage alone no longer appears to be a real obstacle to female economic activity, the presence of children, particularly of young children, in the household is a limiting factor which reduces the likelihood of the mother working. The inverse relationship between labour-force participation of women and the presence of children is demonstrated by all available evidence, even though there are considerable inter-country differences in the proportion of women with dependent children who are in the labour force. The labour-force participation of women with dependent children has been rising in all OECD countries in recent years, whatever the starting level.

Information provided on this topic in national statistics takes different forms, which makes straight comparisons difficult. However, a certain number of conclusions can be derived from data for selected OECD countries, presented in Tables VI - XII.

The first and most obvious conclusion is that in each age group married women without children have a higher participation rate than married women with dependent children. The paradoxical result observed for "all ages" in some countries is due

to the high number of inactive elderly women without children. Again, the number of children plays a role in determining married women's participation rate, which usually declines with each additional child present in the family, as illustrated in Tables VIII, X and XII.

Table VI

AUSTRALIA: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES FOR ALL WOMEN AND FOR WOMEN RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN UNDER AGE 12, BY NUMBER AND AGE OF CHILDREN, 1969, 1973 AND 1977

Number of children aged		Per cent in labour force		
		May		
0-5	6-11	1969	1973	1977
0	1	42	50	54
0	2	42	50	54
0	3+	38	50	44
1	0	28	32	35
1	1	28	35	42
1	2+	25	27	34
2+	0	16	21	25
2+	1+	12	20	24
Total		29	35	40
All women		38	41	44

Sources: ABS Child Care for dates given
ABS Labour Force for dates given, quoted in Australian National Report to OECD High Level Conference on the Employment of Women, February 1980.

Table VII

AUSTRIA: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF WOMEN BY THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN UNDER 15 YEARS OF AGE, MARITAL STATUS AND AGE IN 1981

Age group	Married women		Other women(a)
	Without children	With children under 15	With children under 15
Under 20	52.7	22.1	76.7
20-24	79.3	32.0	84.7
25-29	85.7	36.2	77.8
30-34	82.7	42.0	85.6
35-39	73.5	45.3	75.9
40-49	57.2	39.1	65.7
50-59	36.5	35.9	44.2
60 and over	3.9	1.9	-
Total	35.9	39.7	74.5

(a) Divorced, separated, widows, single.

Source: Oesterreichisches Statistisches Zentralamt, Statistische Nachrichten, No. 10, 1981.

Table VIII

FRANCE: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF MARRIED WOMEN BY FIVE-YEAR AGE GROUPS, NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD IN 1975

(In percentages)

Age	without children	1 child aged			2 children of which youngest is			3 children of which youngest is		
		7-16 yrs.	3-6 yrs.	0-2 yrs.	7-16 yrs.	3-6 yrs.	0-2 yrs.	7-16 yrs.	3-6 yrs.	0-2 yrs.
15-24	79.8	63.0	62.8	56.3	42.2	32.7	24.3	27.9	15.8	8.7
25-29	83.8	73.3	70.3	66.6	50.7	41.2	39.1	34.2	19.6	14.2
30-34	77.4	72.6	68.3	63.2	52.2	46.6	48.0	33.9	23.8	18.9
35-39	69.6	64.7	60.0	59.2	48.6	45.9	45.7	32.3	23.4	15.6
40-44	60.1	50.2	46.5	47.0	39.2	34.0	33.5	26.5	19.5	15.8
45-49	51.9	41.0	37.2	38.0	31.7	26.5	29.4	21.9	16.3	14.4
50-54	44.2	33.9	30.0	29.4	26.2	23.4	26.8	17.1	16.7	13.7
55+	15.5	22.5	16.7	18.7	18.5	19.9	18.2	14.8	16.2	15.7
15+	36.9	49.6	64.7	60.5	42.4	42.1	37.8	28.7	21.7	16.3

Source: INSEE, 1975 Census Results.

Table IX

GREAT BRITAIN: WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY NUMBER OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN, AGE, AND FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME STATUS, IN 1976

Women aged 16-59 (In percentages)

Age	Number of dependent children† None	1	2	3+	3	4	5+	Total
16-24								
Working full-time	65	15	3	[NIL]				53
Working part-time	4	15	12	[2]				6
All working §	69	30	15	[2]				59
Base Ω (-100%)	1 399	261	123	20				1 803
25-34								
Working full-time	74	17	9	8				25
Working part-time	11	24	30	28				24
All working §	85	41	40	37				49
Base Ω (-100%)	523	479	873	490				2 365
35-44								
Working full-time	57	31	21	14				29
Working part-time	20	37	43	39				36
All working §	78	69	65	54				66
Base Ω (-100%)	378	450	635	448				1 911
45-59								
Working full-time	33	21	18	[13]				29
Working part-time	27	41	35	[29]				30
All working §	61	63	54	[42]				60
Base Ω (-100%)	2 176	536	198	88				2 998
Total								
Working full-time	50	22	14	11	10	15	7	33
Working part-time	17	31	34	33	35	32	22	25
All working §	68	53	48	44	45	48	28	58
Base Ω (-100%)	4 476	1 726	1 829	1 046	718	226	102	9 077

Full-time students who worked in the reference week are not included as working.

† Because of the comparatively small base numbers, the percentages for women with 3, 4, or 5+ children are not given by age group.

§ Including a few women whose hours of work are not known.

Ω The base is the total number of women, whether working or not, in each age/child category.

Source: Office of population Census and Surveys, The General Household Survey, 1976.

Table X

NORWAY: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF MARRIED WOMEN BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN, AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD AND AGE OF MOTHER IN 1979 AND 1981

	All married women		Women with children under 16		Age of youngest child							
					0-2 years		3-6 years		7-10 years		11-15 years	
	1979	1981	1979	1981	1979	1981	1979	1981	1979	1981	1979	1981
	56	59	60	64	45	48	56	59	67	73	75	77
of which with:												
one child			66	69	56	56	58	66	69	72	73	77
2 children			57	62	39	44	56	58	65	75	80	79
3 children			58	60	38	47	58	55	71	73		
4 and more			46	49	34	33	44	55				
Age of mother:												
All ages: 16-74	56	59	60	64	45	48	56	59	67	73	75	77
20-24	55	58	42	45	39	43						
25-29	56	58	51	52	46	45	54	56				
30-49	67	72	65	69	49	54	58	62	67	73	78	80
50-59	60	65	66	69							70	69

Source: Norway, Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Market Statistics, 1979, 1981

Table XI

SWEDEN: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY SEX, AGE AND PRESENCE OF CHILDREN UNDER 7, 1963-1982

Age	Men					Women					Women with children under 7				
	1963	1968	1973	1978	1982	1963	1968	1973	1978	1982	1963	1968	1973	1978	1982
16-19	62.5	55.1	53.7	55.0	48.0	59.6	54.0	49.8	55.5	49.0	(42.1)	(53.3)	(38.7)	(53.6)	
20-24	81.2	77.6	78.4	82.9	83.8	64.9	63.6	67.6	77.6	81.5	33.6	44.9	53.7	66.2	77.6
25-34	95.4	94.6	93.7	94.9	94.0	55.2	55.7	65.0	76.8	84.7	39.6	41.4	54.0	69.6	81.3
35-44	96.9	95.6	95.0	96.4	96.3	56.5	63.4	71.5	81.6	87.3	36.6	42.4	53.0	67.7	80.6
45-54	96.5	95.0	94.3	94.7	94.2	57.4	60.2	71.0	80.2	85.5					
55-64	89.6	89.0	82.7	79.1	77.7	39.9	42.9	46.3	53.3	58.9					
65-74	43.3	33.3	23.9	13.7	13.2	10.9	9.3	7.4	4.3	4.1					
16-74	85.2	82.1	79.5	78.3	77.0	49.4	50.5	55.2	62.2	66.3	38.0	42.1	53.5	68.5	80.5

Source: Sweden, National Central Bureau of Statistics, The Labour Force Surveys, 1963-1982.

Table XII

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF CURRENTLY-MARRIED AND EVER-MARRIED WOMEN, BY PRESENCE AND AGE OF CHILDREN 1970-1980 (a)

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian non-institutional population 16 years and over)

Presence and age of children	1970 Civilian labour force participation rate	1975 Civilian labour force participation rate	1978 Civilian labour force participation rate	1980 Civilian labour force participation rate
Married women, husband present	40.8	44.4	47.6	50.2
No children under 18	42.2	43.9	44.7	45.1
With children under 18	39.7	44.8	50.2	
Children 6 to 17 only	49.2	52.3	57.2	61.8
Children under 6	30.3	36.6	41.6	44.9
Children 3 to 5, none under 3	37.0	42.0	47.9	
Children under 3	25.8	32.5	37.6	
Other ever-married women (b)	39.1	40.8	42.8	44.1
No children under 18	33.4	33.2	34.4	35.2
With children under 18	60.6	62.4	67.7	
Children 6 to 17 only	67.3	67.1	71.2	74.3
Children under 6	50.7	55.1	59.9	59.2
Children 3 to 5, none under 3	58.8	59.8	63.9	
Children under 3	43.6	49.6	55.5	

a) Number in civilian labour force as per cent of civilian non-institutional population in the specific group.

b) Includes divorced, widowed, and married, husband absent.

Sources: US Bureau of the Census, A statistical portrait of women in the United States: 1978; Current population reports, Population Profile of the United States, 1980.

The age of the youngest child is a major factor limiting the mother's possibility to work. Children of school age require the constant attention of their mothers much less than those who are younger -- particularly those under three. So, women's participation rates increase with the age of the youngest child. For instance, in the United States 62 per cent of married women with children aged 6-17 are economically active, while only 45 per cent of those with children under six years of age are in the labour force. If the youngest child is under three, the participation rate declines still further (Table XII). In Canada, 54-55 per cent of married women under 44 years of age, with children older than 6 were active in the late 1970s, compared to 36-37 per cent of women having younger children (11). If both factors are combined, that is if a married woman has several children, the youngest of whom is under three, then the likelihood of her being economically active is reduced very considerably, although there are noticeable differences between countries in this respect. In France in 1975, 16 per cent of married women with three or more children, the youngest of which was under three, were in the labour force. On the other hand, in Norway -- a country with a particularly high general rate of female labour-force participation -- as much as one third of women with four or more children, the youngest of which was under three, were in the labour force in 1979-1981. (Tables VIII and X.)

In Australia 54 per cent of mothers having one child aged 6-11 were in the labour force in 1977 but for mothers of two or more children under six and at least one child over six years of age the figure was only 24 per cent (Table VI).

Inter-country differences in activity of women with dependent children should be interpreted with some caution, particularly because of the varying proportion of part-time work. If the rates in Tables VI-XII were expressed in "full-time equivalents", differences between countries would be narrowed down.

In recent years participation rates of women with dependent children have been increasing in all countries, in some quite rapidly. In the United States the rates of married women with children increased faster between 1970 and 1980 than those for married women as a whole.

In most countries for which we have recent information over 50 per cent of women responsible for one child are now economically active -- at least on a part-time basis. (In Australia this is the case, if the child has reached school age.) In Sweden, which represents the extreme case, a large majority of women with children are working, even if they care for three or more. Labour-force participation rates for women with children under seven, whether currently married or not, more than doubled between the early 1960s and 1982, increasing particularly in the younger age groups, as illustrated in Table XI.

The reasons why the presence of children has become less of an obstacle for the working mother can be ascribed to a series

of social and economic factors -- for instance the development of institutional child care enabling mothers of young children to work outside the home. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a considerable growth of pre-school programmes for children aged 3-5 throughout much of Europe, which expanded the availability of out-of-home child care for this age group (12).

The consequence of the high nursery and primary school enrolment of children aged 4 and 5 is that a growing number of women with children in these ages could have found employment, even if only on a part-time basis, although mothers of younger children have the added problem of day care outside nursery school hours which rarely coincide with their own hours of work.

Day care remains a big problem particularly for working mothers of children under 3. Although the availability of out-of-home child-care services has expanded in recent years in most countries for which there is information (13), the scope of non-family, non-relative care remains generally limited and there is unsatisfied demand. The majority of working women with children under 3 rely on relatives, friends or domestic help to take care of their young children while they work outside the home, though there is evidence that in many countries grandparents' childminding is on the decline.

ii) Educational factors

Educational factors associated with increases in women's labour force participation are of fundamental importance. In every country there is evidence that both male and -- particularly -- female participation rates increase considerably with level of education (Table XIII). Nevertheless, differences in the other determinants of female participation (e.g. social and cultural factors, economic conditions and government policies) weigh to such an extent that countries with a high average educational level for women do not necessarily have a high rate of female labour-force participation.

On the other hand, there is some evidence of an association between the type of courses followed by girls and young women and the level of female labour-force participation. However, it is hard to say how far a more "career-oriented" education influences such participation, or a high proportion of women in paid employment influences girls' choice of "practical" subjects, or to what extent both are influenced by the same third factors (14).

iii) Economic factors

A considerable proportion of women work because -- like men -- they have no option: it is an economic necessity. This category consists firstly of women-heads of household, whether living alone or caring for a family. The number of female-headed households has been increasing in most OECD countries,

together with rising divorce rates. In the United States families headed by women represent about 15 per cent of the total (15) and in numerous other Member countries, the proportion has also been increasing rapidly.

As to economic necessity: in North America, the United Kingdom and probably many other countries, the proportion of families below the poverty line would increase considerably if wives did not work (11). In Europe, some useful information on this topic can be derived from a survey carried out in five countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands) in 1972 (16). According to this survey, 40 per cent, on the average, of married women in prime-age groups (aged 20-54) cited economic necessity or insufficient salary of the husband as their main reason for working. A large proportion of the rest said they were working for "specific economic reasons" or to "improve the standard of living of the family". Only about one-fifth of women in Western Europe work for reasons "other than economic", such as the interest of the job or the status and independence it confers.

The relationship between husband's earnings and wife's labour-force participation is complex, being affected by the interplay of many factors. Generally it is an inverse U-shaped relationship where, in a first phase, the wife's participation increases with rising husband's earnings, because in the first phase the effect of rising wife's education (which is likely to increase together with the husband's education) and of rising wife's earnings outweighs the effect of rising husband's pay. When husband's earnings increase further and are situated within certain brackets, the wife's labour-force participation tends to remain more or less stable, as the two sets of factors offset each other (17). Finally, as the husband's earning factor becomes predominant, the wife's labour-force participation starts to decline. The validity of this pattern can be tested, in particular, on data available for the United States and France (18). (See Tables XIV and XV).

American sources indicate that the level of husband's real earnings at which the wife's economic activity starts to fall off, has been rising (19). This shows a growing level of the wife's education, earning potential, as well as a rising job satisfaction and a greater commitment to a working career.

The motivation of married women's work by economic necessity contains an apparent paradox, because female labour-force participation is relatively less important in countries having a lower GNP per head. In fact, a positive correlation exists between per-capita GNP of OECD countries and female-labour force participation. (Calculation based on 1980 data for Canada, United States and 16 countries of Europe: $R = .57$, correlation significant at a 2 per cent level.)

There seem to be two main explanations to this paradox. First, there is the subjective feeling of necessity, linked to

Table XIII

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND BY SEX IN FIVE OECD COUNTRIES

Country, year, level of education	Males	Females
Belgium, 1977		
Primary education or incomplete secondary	83	30
General education, lower	94	55
" " higher	96	66
Technical or vocational school, lower	97	60
" " " higher	98	70
Lower teachers training	93	79
Higher, below university level	98	79
University	98	82
Canada, 1980		
0-8 years of education	59	26
High school	79	53
Some post-secondary education	77	59
Post-secondary certificate or diploma	89	66
University degree	92	72
Norway, 1980		
Primary school	69	43
Secondary school I	85	61
Secondary school II	82	65
University	90	77
Spain, 1975		
Less than primary education	74	13
Primary education	84	22
Secondary general education	58	28
Vocational training	76	46
Technical/engineering school	87	53
University	87	66
United States, 1978		
Not a high school graduate	63	32
High school graduate	86	56
1-3 years of college	82	57
4 or more years of college	90	66

Note: Data are not strictly comparable between countries because of differences in age coverage: Belgium, population and labour force aged 14-64; Canada, population and labour force aged 15+; Norway, population and labour force aged 16-74; Spain, population aged 14+ and total labour force; United States, population and labour force aged 18+.

Sources:

Belgium: INS, Socio-economic survey, Brussels, 1977.

Canada: Statistics Canada, The labour force, 1980, Ottawa, 1980.

Norway: Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour market statistics 1980, Oslo, 1981.

Spain: Instituto Nacional de Estadistica, Caracteristicas de la poblacion española deducidas del padron municipal de habitantes, 1975, tomo II, Madrid, 1979.

USA: US Bureau of the Census, A statistical portrait of women in the United States, 1978, Washington, 1980.

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Table XIV

FRANCE: MARRIED WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD, 1975
(Agricultural and service personnel excluded)

Social category of head of household	Labour-force participation rate
High level manager	41.8
Enterprise or business owner	45.7
Middle level manager or technician	56.4
Employee	54.5
Manual worker	44.4

Source: 1975 Census data.

Table XV

UNITED STATES: PERCENTAGE OF WIVES WITH OWN EARNINGS IN TOTAL NUMBER OF HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES BY EARNINGS OF HUSBAND, 1981

Husband's earnings ($ per year)	Percentage of wives with earnings
Total	56.7
No earnings	22.2
1 - 1 999	55.6
2 000 - 2 999	55.6
3 000 - 3 999	58.7
4 000 - 4 999	60.4
5 000 - 5 999	61.4
6 000 - 6 999	63.5
7 000 - 8 499	67.2
8 500 - 9 999	68.0
10 000 - 12 499	66.0
12 500 - 14 999	68.7
15 000 - 17 499	70.2
17 500 - 19 999	69.6
20 000 - 24 999	65.7
25 000 - 29 999	65.8
30 000 - 34 999	63.0
35 000 - 49 999	57.0
50 000 - 74 999	47.1
75 000 and above	42.2

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Current population Reports, Money Income of Families and Persons in the United States, 1981.

rising expectations, as the wealth of society increases. However, and more importantly, there is the objective factor of the changing structure of household expenditure with rising national income. Households try to maximise utility of both market-purchased and home-produced commodities (20). Many goods and services that under different economic conditions were produced in the household become gradually uneconomic because of their time intensity and so are purchased on the market. Female labour which was earlier directed at household production is being liberated by the substitution of market-produced goods, and influenced to meet the cost of these goods by working outside the home for pay. This freeing of women from certain household duties is further accelerated by a growing availability of household appliances, which is also an income-related phenomenon. In addition, the rising level of female wages further increases the opportunity cost of not having employment outside the home.

The substitution of market-produced goods and more generally the new pattern of household expenditure (the use of disposable goods of many kinds, etc.) increase the amount of cash necessary to satisfy a part of the needs which were previously satisfied through home production. The increased amount of cash, necessary because of the rising "socialisation" or "monetization" of the household economy, creates a situation where growing numbers of married women are faced with the necessity to work, while national income per head rises.

Moreover, because of the general change in consumption habits, it becomes increasingly difficult for a married woman to remain inactive, other things being equal, if the standard of living of the family is to be maintained, particularly in relative terms, which is no less important. Hence the feeling of economic necessity.

iv) Social factors

The social climate of industrialised countries has changed very considerably during the last three decades. An increasing proportion of women now feel that they want the independence gained by paid employment. Because of the change in consumption patterns, characterised by the shift from home-made to market-bought goods and services, a woman needs an increasing amount of cash, at equal social status of the family, to satisfy her own personal needs. She desires to earn her own money to enlarge her personal freedom and gain equality of treatment with other family members, particularly with the husband. An increased employment and earning capacity is also likely to increase her influence in family decision-making.

The higher propensity of the better educated women to work increases the status of paid employment, while the average housewife tends to be considered as uneducated. All women are likely to make more interesting contacts and to acquire useful

information if they work, rather than stay at home in relative isolation.

The rise in the divorce rate and the increasing instability of marriage creates a situation where a working career is a protection against finding oneself left alone, too late in life suddenly to get adequate professional training.

IV

THE RISING DEMAND FOR FEMALE LABOUR

1. GROWTH OF THE SERVICE SECTOR

One of the main reasons why female employment has been increasing more than male employment is that women benefited from the expansion of the service sector, where they predominate, while men are more likely than women to have jobs in manufacturing and in other goods-producing sectors.

In 1980, 60-85 per cent of working women in the OECD area were concentrated in services -- that is, leaving aside the South European countries such as Greece or Portugal, where the agricultural sector still occupies a large share of the labour force. This has been a rising trend over the years, the proportion of the female labour force employed in services being everywhere considerably higher than for males (21).

Conversely, in industry (manufacturing, mining, public utilities and construction), the proportion of women has been invariably lower than the proportion of men. The weight of industry in total female employment had a generally declining trend in all OECD countries with the exception of Japan.

The relative decline of industrial employment and output compared to the service sector, termed "de-industrialisation" by some authors and "transition to the post-industrial society" by others (22), has become apparent in a number of developed countries in recent decades, although in many of them a shift of employment from industry to services has occurred also in the case of men. There seem to be several reasons for this phenomenon. First, productivity tends to grow faster in industry than in services. As a result, there would be a change in the pattern of employment even without any change in the pattern of demand. Secondly, as a country gets richer, it can be expected to spend more on services, particularly such as health and education, and demand for services increases. The income elasticity of demand for services is greater than the income elasticity of demand for goods, and with rising national income the structure of demand changes, a larger proportion of resources being devoted to the tertiary sector (23).

The gradual shift to a "service economy" observed in many developed countries in recent decades has been largely favourable to female employment. An association is in fact discernible between the growth of total employment in different sectors and the share of women in these sectors.

We have tested this by establishing a correlation between the growth rate of employment (male and female) between 1973 and 1981, and the proportion of female employment (in total employment) in the base year for different sectors. The rank correlation coefficients and their statistical significance are shown in Annex Table A-I. They indicate that in the majority of countries for which information is available there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the rate of employment growth in a sector and the relative importance of female employment in it. Sectors where there was a high proportion of female labour in 1973 experienced a faster rate of employment growth than sectors with a low proportion.

An analysis of the changes in employment in different sectors shows that, since 1973, the manufacturing sector rarely offered substantial employment possibilities either to men or to women. (More details are given in Table 6 of OECD Employment Outlook, September 83 and OECD Labour Force Statistics.) In most countries industrial employment declined. The exceptions are Canada, where employment of both men and women in manufacturing increased, and the United States and Japan, where employment in manufacturing increased considerably for women, and where there was a slight reduction in manufacturing employment for men.

In other countries the development was different. In Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Spain and the United Kingdom both male and female manufacturing employment declined, the female more than the male. In the Netherlands, the decline for men was greater than for women, whereas in Germany both declined by about the same rate.

Comparable data are not available for France. But according to a recent study (24), while in individual industrial branches women suffered greater relative job loss than men, total female industrial employment declined less than male employment. This was due to the branch distribution of female labour and to the fact that in some enterprises female employment increased, even though the branch employment was declining, which affected the overall average. Moreover, it seems that in France skilled workers have been more affected by job losses than unskilled workers, many of whom are women.

This is worth noting because it contradicts the usually accepted view that employers are likely to keep on skilled men, putting them, if necessary, on short time if work is slack, and that women, who are mostly unskilled and can be more easily replaced or re-hired if business activity picks up, are more readily dismissed. In the present recession, this long-presumed pattern was not the general rule, even in manufacturing.

In the service sector, particularly in social and personal services and in banking and insurance, both male and female employment had a general increasing tendency between 1973 and 1981. In both these sectors female employment increased usually more than male over the 8 years considered, although there were a few exceptions, in particular Australia. The wholesale and retail trade sector also continued to hire mainly women, at least in the countries where it had grown in recent years.

In summary, "what kept women's employment buoyant as a whole was the continued expansion of certain parts of the service sector. The growth of these matched the falls in employment elsewhere." (25)

2. THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

The development of the public sector has been a very important factor in the sustained demand for female labour. The share of the public sector in total employment has increased in most OECD countries in recent years. For instance in France, about half of the total net employment creation between 1974 and 1980 occurred there (26). This expansion created new job opportunities for women.

There are many reasons why women have been finding jobs in the public sector relatively easy of access, ranging from a greater degree of fairness and less discrimination in government employment, to occupational skill requirements (administrative, clerical, nursing, teaching and social work are all occupations where women are in high demand). There are, too, quite frequent offers of part-time work.

Public expenditure on health, education and social welfare has grown quite dramatically in most OECD countries in recent years. It has generated considerable employment everywhere, even though the elasticities of public employment in relation to public expenditure have been shown to vary a great deal as between countries. Those where the elasticity was high tended also to have a large proportion of women in public sector employment (27).

In many countries, employment-generating effects of transfer payments (social security, health insurance, etc.) have been considerable and largely beneficial to women. As pointed out by Martin Rein, "the expanding social welfare economy has been an important and underrecognised source of job opportunities for women. [In the United States] in 1980 nearly 30 per cent of the 40 million women in the labour force worked in human services compared with only 10 per cent of the 53 million men in the workforce. Comparing patterns of job growth for women and men between 1940 and 1980, the social welfare industry created jobs for one out of every three women entering the labour force but only for one out of every seven men." (28)

3. PART-TIME WORK

An important feature which was relevant to the growth of female employment in services -- as well as in the public sector -- was the rising demand for part-time work. For example, in the United Kingdom, 29 per cent of service employees were working part-time in 1979, compared to 7 per cent in other sectors. In 1961, the share of part-time employees in services amount to 13 per cent and in other sectors to 6 per cent (29). Over a half of women employed in distributive and miscellaneous services in the late 1970s were part-time workers, which was twice the level of 1961. In Germany in the late 1970s, the share of part-time workers was two and a half times higher in services than in industry.

The growth of part-time work in services was due to a series of factors. Some service branches are especially suitable for part-time employment, for example retailing or catering, where the amount of business tends to vary greatly according to the time of day or the day of week, and also some clerical work where continuity is not essential, which can be easily shared and is either seasonal or casual in nature (30).

The greater flexibility and the low cost of part-time work have been other factors of interest to employers, particularly in times of fluctuating business. Changes in operating conditions (including the use of new technology) have led many enterprises to a restructuring of activity and to a redistribution of work tasks. Certain jobs that previously required a full-time person could now be performed on a part-time basis. Hourly earnings of part-time workers are lower than those of full-time workers in most OECD countries which more than compensates for the somewhat higher non-wage labour costs of part-time employment. Even when hourly earnings of part-time workers are not lower, as in Australia or the Netherlands (31), the availability of a certain proportion of part-time employees permits a closer adjustment of staff to the volume of business, and that represents a cost saving for the enterprise. Information available for Germany indicates that employers tend to consider part-time workers as more keen to learn than full-time workers, often achieving rapidly a higher degree of productivity than full-timers of the same qualification level (32).

Overall, a considerable proportion of female employment is on a part-time basis. The share of part-timers in total female employment ranges from one-fifth in Japan to about one-quarter in North America, one-third, on the average, in the European Economic Community, 35 per cent in Australia (1980), and almost a half in Norway and Sweden. Male part-time employment amounts in most countries to only a few per cent of the total. Thus, the great majority of part-time workers are women (33). (See Table XVI.)

Part-time employment has, on the whole, been growing faster than full-time employment. In some countries such as

Table XVI

OVERALL SIZE AND STRUCTURE OF PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

	Ratio of part-time working						Women's share in part-time employment	
	Both sexes		Men		Women			
	1973	1981	1973	1981	1973	1981	1973	1981
Australia	11.4	15.9	3.4	5.2	27.3	34.6	79.6	79.0
Belgium	2.8	6.4	0.4	1.3	8.2	16.4	89.8	86.2
Canada (a)	10.6	13.5	5.1	6.8	20.3	31.8	69.5	72.0
Denmark	17.0	20.8	1.9	3.0	40.3	43.6	93.4	92.0
Finland (b)	3.9	4.5	1.4	1.7	6.7	7.6	81.0	80.2
France	5.1	7.4	1.4	1.9	11.2	15.9	82.1	84.6
Germany	7.7	10.2	1.0	1.0	20.0	25.7	92.4	93.8
Greece	..	2.1	..	1.1	..	4.3	..	63.0
Ireland (c)	4.0	3.1	1.8	1.3	10.1	8.0	67.5	68.6
Italy	3.9	2.7	2.3	1.4	8.5	5.8	55.4	64.1
Japan	7.9	10.0	4.8	4.9	17.3	19.6	60.9	67.3
Luxembourg (c)	4.5	5.8	1.0	1.0	13.9	17.1	83.3	87.5
Netherlands (d)	4.4	19.4	1.1	8.4	15.5	45.2	80.4	67.6
New Zealand	10.8	13.9	4.7	5.0	22.0	27.4	71.3	78.7
Norway (a)	23.5	28.3	8.7	10.6	47.6	53.6	77.0	77.9
Sweden	18.0	25.2	3.7	7.2	38.8	46.4	88.0	84.5
United Kingdom	15.3	15.4	1.8	1.4	38.3	37.1	92.1	94.3
United States	13.9	14.4	7.2	7.5	24.8	23.7	68.4	70.3

a. 1975 and 1981.

b. 1976 and 1981.

c. 1973 and 1979.

d. 1981 data are not comparable with 1973 data because of a change in the definition of part-time workers.

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, September 1983, Table 18.

Australia and Sweden, the rise in female part-time employment was the most important contribution to total net employment growth in recent years, as shown in Table XVII. If employment is expressed as "equivalent full-time", with part-time employment reduced in proportion to the average number of working hours of full-time and part-time workers, female employment has been growing mostly less fast than official data indicate (a major exception being the United States). But even in terms of "full-time equivalents" women have benefited more from net employment creation than men, as shown in Table XVIII.

Table XVII

CONTRIBUTIONS OF FULL- AND PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT
TO EMPLOYMENT CHANGES, 1973-81

(thousands)

	Period	Change in employment over the period					
		Both sexes		Men		Women	
		Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Australia	1973-81	413	393	244	84	169	309
Belgium	1973-81	-117	127	-122	21	5	106
Canada	1975-81	1 085	485	447	110	638	375
Denmark	1975-81	46	112	-19	13	65	99
Finland	1976-81	73	17	26	4	47	13
France	1973-81	493	540	169	64	324	476
Germany	1973-81	-270	685	-158	1	-112	684
Ireland	1975-79	119	-5	83	-2	36	-3
Italy	1973-81	2 120	-154	747	-111	1 373	-43
Japan	1973-81	3 010	1 150	1 980	190	1 050	960
Luxembourg	1973-79	1	2	-2	0	3	2
Netherlands	1973-79	196	162	65	24	131	138
New Zealand	1973-81	82	49	25	3	57	47
Norway	1975-81	73	133	46	26	27	107
Sweden	1973-81	-18	364	-90	81	72	283
United Kingdom	1973-81	-626	-86	-918	-67	292	-19
United States	1973-81	10 274	2 158	3 553	437	6 720	1 720

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, September 1983, Table 20.

Table XVIII

TRENDS IN TOTAL AND "EQUIVALENT FULL-TIME" EMPLOYMENT

A percentage rate of change
B (percentage contribution to absolute change)

		Total employment		Equivalent full-time (a)	
		M	F	M	F
Australia	A	9.3	29.6	8.0	21.2
1970-1980	B	(40	60)	(48	52)
Canada	A	10.4	30.5	9.5	27.0
1975-1981	B	(37	63)	(40	60)
United States	A	14.7	42.1	14.2	42.7
1970-1981	B	(37	63)	(38	62)
EEC (b)	A	0.2	8.8	0.4	8.3
1973-1979	B	(4	96)	(9	91)

a. Full-time employment plus part-time employment deflated by the ratio of average full-time to part-time working hours.

b. Data refer to seven EEC countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Sources: OECD Employment Outlook, plus estimates by the author.

4. SHORT-TERM AND CASUAL EMPLOYMENT

Another factor relevant to the rising demand for female labour was the increase in short-term and casual employment. In summer 1980, one female employee in ten in EEC countries had a fixed-term or a temporary appointment (34). The proportion of temporary workers was particularly high among young women. From the enterprises' point of view, operating with a certain contingent of casual or temporary staff reduces labour costs, since it permits a closer adjustment of employed numbers to production requirements, particularly in conditions of fluctuating demand. In addition, temporary workers earn lower wages (having no seniority) and they are usually not entitled to a number of social benefits. In this context mention should also be made of home or

contract workers, who are mostly women, and of clandestine workers, earning little and having no social protection, many of whom are women, and whose numbers are generally known to have increased in recent years, although they are not covered in official statistics (35).

Clearly, one of the drawbacks of the sustained demand for female labour in recent years has been the tendency to channel considerable numbers, particularly of young women, into temporary, insecure employment, offering little career prospects and leading to frequent unemployment spells (36). Hiring casual, low-cost female labour was one of the ways some entrepreneurs tried to cope with the recession. In the event of a recovery these women would be handicapped in finding better employment, because the "wrong type" of experience and insufficient qualifications would be held against them.

5. OFFICE AUTOMATION AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

One element that in the future might change the rather reassuring forecast just given of the growth of female employment is the automation of office work. The service sector, in which office work occupies a large place, is currently being confronted with a series of problems related to technological change. Concern is often voiced that advancing office automation might reduce employment opportunities for women. The new generation of office equipment -- word processors, optical character readers, minicomputers, etc. -- is feared to have a radical impact on the nature of work in the office and on employment prospects. Much of the new technology provides scope for replacing labour with machines, and there is, therefore, considerable worry among service employees that their jobs might be in danger.

It is true that one micro-processor can do the work of two or three typists, that filing clerks become unnecessary if there is little paper to file, that bank clerks are superfluous if the public is given more access to cash-dispensing machines, and that many draughtsmen can be replaced by computer-based charting systems. Even professional and managerial staff are not protected from possible employment reductions if there are fewer personnel to supervise, when information gathering becomes more rapid, and alternative courses of action can be evaluated easily and efficiently by using an interactive computer model rather than a series of time-consuming executive meetings (37).

While such an assessment is true enough for particular situations and particular office jobs, events have shown that new technology is not only job displacing but job creating. For instance, the net effect of the introduction of computers since 1960 was to create more jobs than were displaced: computer analysts, programmers, computer operators and personnel necessary to handle a much larger flow of information than previously became

necessary and many of them, particularly in the less skilled categories, were women. Similar effects can be expected also from the new generation of machines like micro-processors.

A recently completed study on technological change and office jobs in OECD countries (38) has shown that although the new technology was obviously labour saving in character, it has not resulted in widespread female job loss so far. It has led, however, to a considerable reallocation of female labour within enterprises and to changes in office job content.

On the one hand, there has been a slowing of demand for certain categories of workers, particularly clerical staff engaged in routine information handling, and for lower-skilled white-collar workers in general. On the other hand, since the rate of diffusion of new technology has been rather moderate, and the spread of technology was not even among countries and among enterprises, the expansion of demand for information services has resulted in a substantial rise in the volume of activity in many enterprises, both large and small. While in many cases there have been cutbacks in the labour content of certain office tasks, employees were mostly absorbed in other units of enterprises, following the expansion of business.

In sectors such as insurance and banking, when staff numbers exceeded requirements, normal retirement rate, the usual turnover and unfilled vacancies were mostly sufficient to adjust employment to business needs after new technology had been introduced. It is, however, important to notice that the process of job reduction by "natural wastage" markedly reduces employment opportunities for young people and for women wishing to re-enter the labour market (39). In some countries, increase in part-time work has become noticeable coinciding with the introduction of new technology. In certain other instances, though, new employment opportunities have become available for women. For example, they have been finding jobs in the computer field, as reported particularly in the United States (40). On balance, technological change has caused few redundancies on a net basis, so far; but it has been detrimental more particularly to new labour entrants, because of enterprise staff relocation policies and of the rising average level of skill requirements.

One of the reasons why the introduction of new technology did not affect female office employment more severely was that, because of the recession, the introduction of new equipment has been relatively slow. In a situation of low demand and low profit margins, enterprises have little incentive to invest in sophisticated equipment. Yet, the slower the technological change, the more easily labour markets can adapt to it. As argued by Diane Werneke, if the spread of technology became more rapid -- either in response to a pick-up of economic activity or, on the contrary, under increased pressure to reduce costs in order to remain competitive in world and domestic markets -- women in the office sector might become more seriously affected than hitherto. The "slump" alternative may result in actual cuts in employment,

while under the alternative of a cyclical upturn women might have difficulties in getting some of the more attractive, newly created office jobs, because of a relative lack of technical skills (41).

Skill requirements have been changing and female workers have had to make either a serious adaptation and retraining effort -- often without financial counterpart -- in order not to be redundant, or accept jobs for which their former skills were inappropriate, with the resulting loss of seniority, status and advancement prospects.

6. MALE/FEMALE EARNINGS DIFFERENTIALS

Finally, the fact that female labour is less well remunerated than male labour has been a factor mitigating in favour of female employment relatively to male employment in recent years. In particular, the advantage of employment increase that women have gained through the expansion of the service sector was based to a large extent on the relative low costs of female labour. The low pay offered in certain service occupations practically reserved the positions for women and precluded any serious competition for the jobs from men, even if male unemployment was high.

In a survey of sex discrimination at work carried out among female workers in the EEC in the summer of 1980, more respondents said it was an advantage to be a woman in getting a job in their place of work than said it was a disadvantage, while over half considered that it made no difference. But for promotion prospects and particularly for salary levels, the percentage of respondents considering the fact of being a woman as a disadvantage far exceeded that holding the opposite view. Those claiming that it was an advantage to be a woman for getting a job tended to belong to the lowest qualified category, having left school at 14 or 15, working in a shop or store, often part-time (42).

The results of this survey indicate that, if women were finding employment in considerable numbers, it was largely to fill the low-grade jobs, while their breakthrough into higher status employment, offering better pay, was slow. In many important respects, such as promotion possibilities, in-service training and, above all, salary levels, women's position has remained weak. In OECD countries, women earn, on the average, 20-40 per cent less than men (43).

On the other hand, the growth of female employment was apparently not affected by the narrowing of male/female earnings differentials, reported in all OECD countries in recent years. Average female earnings increased everywhere faster than male earnings, as did female employment. The questions may well be asked if this rise in female pay slowed down the employment

growth, or if female employment would have gone up more in the absence of equal pay policies. An inter-country comparison of employment and earnings developments in the last decade suggests a negative answer to these questions. If the growth of female employment had been slowed down by the rise in relative female pay, one might expect that in the countries with a higher increase in relative earnings there would be a smaller rise in female employment, and vice versa.

However, this was not the case. A rank correlation of 12 OECD countries with comparable data, between relative changes in female employment shares and in relative earnings, gives a rank correlation coefficient -.098, i.e. without statistical significance and very near to zero.

Admittedly, in the United States, where relative female earnings were rising very slowly or stagnating during the 1970-1980 decade, female unemployment increased less, on the average, than in Europe, where relative female earnings went up much more. In Australia, both relative earnings and female unemployment increased more than in Europe or North America. Inside Europe, however, there has been no evidence of a significant relationship between the rise in female relative pay, in a country, and the growth of female unemployment.

Thus, it would be wrong to conclude that women have "priced themselves out" of additional jobs. Because of the persisting occupational segregation, most women work in predominantly "female" jobs, where they compete mainly with each other (44). Only a relatively limited proportion of women work in "mixed" occupations, where they are in direct competition with men. In these occupations, lower wage claims do not necessarily increase the demand for female labour, since experience, educational background, reliability and the capacity for decision-making may be considered as more important than low supply cost, particularly in the higher occupational grades.

Low wage levels reserve some of the predominantly "female" jobs for women, precluding any real competition from men.

Rising wages in the predominantly "female" occupations may have induced some employers to invest in labour-saving technology, in order to hire less female labour. While this was apparently the case in certain branches of manufacturing in some countries, the share of the manufacturing sector in total employment (male and female) has been declining as a part of the structural changes taking place in advanced economies at the present time. Labour-replacement technological innovations have been introduced also in the service sector, which employs the vast majority of the female workforce. Potentially, therefore, these are a much greater cause for concern. However, as discussed in the previous section, the employment creating effect of new technology in offices, for example, mostly exceeded the effect of employment reduction, at least so far.

V

FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS

1. MALE AND FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

The different patterns of male and female labour supply and labour demand have produced different patterns of unemployment. Despite the more rapid growth of female employment, the female labour force outstripped the male to the extent that in most Member countries, and in the OECD area as a whole (see Table I), female unemployment rates have been rising faster than those for males for most of the time since 1960. In fact, during the 1960s, male unemployment had an overall declining trend in the majority of countries, while female unemployment was mostly growing, although at a much lower average rate than in the 1970s, which were marked by more years of recession than the previous decade.

Looking at unemployment data in individual countries (Table XIX) female unemployment rates have been consistently higher in most, the few exceptions being Finland, Ireland, Japan and the United Kingdom. However, the data are not strictly comparable, because of variations in coverage and definitions (45). In the United Kingdom, for example, not all unemployed women are included in the registered unemployment figures because they do not register as unemployed even if they are seeking work. The total number of unregistered unemployed women appears to have remained fairly constant at around 250,000 between 1970 and 1980. When estimates of unregistered unemployed are added to the figures of those who are registered, the rate of increase in total female unemployment during the 1970s is much closer to, though still higher than, the rate of increase of unemployment for men. However, the level of total female unemployment has still been considerably less than the level for men (46).

Unemployment trends have differed considerably by country, as indicated in Table XIX. Norway and Sweden stand out as countries which managed to have remarkably low unemployment rates for both men and women during the period under review. The first recession (which occurred with a certain time lag, compared to most European countries) had only a limited effect

on the labour market. This was due, in a large part, to the active labour market policy. The policy followed two main aims: (i) to safeguard employment at the workplace by preventing layoffs and dismissals, and (ii) to provide education, training and work for the young entrants to the labour market unable to find a job, and for women looking for employment after spending an extended period at home. The purpose of the policy, with respect to women workers, was to reinforce the structural measures designed to improve their employment opportunities and to provide short-term assistance for those who were unemployed. There were also policy measures directed towards maintaining jobs of those who were in employment, such as job security legislation, investment incentives through the use of counter-cyclical investment funds, grants for inventory stockpiling, and support for training schemes aimed to avoid redundancies when it was no longer possible to maintain employment (47). Both countries succeeded in keeping unemployment rates for women and for men at a remarkably low level even in the present recession. Thus in Sweden the unemployment rate for women increased from 2.3 per cent in 1980 to 2.7 per cent in 1981 and then only to 3.4 per cent in 1982, while the male unemployment rate increased from 1.7 per cent in 1980 to 2.3 in 1981 and 3.0 in 1982. Similarly in Norway the unemployment increase was small. Female unemployment was only 3.0 per cent in 1982 and the male unemployment rate 2.3 per cent.

Among countries with a successful employment policy and low male and female unemployment rates Austria should also be mentioned. In Switzerland demand for labour, particularly in services, remained sufficiently strong, while the pressure of supply diminished, for unemployment rates to be at a fraction of what they are in most other countries. Finally, Japan has also been very successful in keeping unemployment rates down for both men and women.

Other countries had to face greater unemployment problems. In France, both male, and particularly, female unemployment have been high. Female unemployment rates in France were markedly higher than male rates already during the pre-1973 period of prosperity. This relatively high level can be ascribed to a series of demographic, institutional and economic factors, such as the arrival of the larger postwar generations on the labour market, the organisation of the labour market, existing social security provisions, as well as the consequences of changes in economic structures (48). In the 1970s the unemployment level was considerably aggravated by cyclical factors, of which more will be said below.

In Italy a substantial difference between the male and female unemployment rates existed before the crisis; however, the depression has exacerbated the phenomenon. A similar combination of demographic, institutional and economic factors, as in France, may explain the situation there, i.e. an increase in working-age population corresponding to the post-World War II "baby boom", a shift in status of a considerable number of workers from self-employed or unpaid family helpers to salaried employees, as well

Table XIX

TRENDS IN MALE AND FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, 1950-1982

	1950		1960		1970		1980		1981		1982	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Australia	-	-	-	-	1.1	2.8	5.0	7.8	4.7	7.4	6.2	8.4
Austria	2.2(a)	2.4(a)			1.1	1.9	1.3	2.8	1.9	3.6	2.8	4.6
Belgium	5.2	4.2	3.5	2.5	1.6	2.3	4.3	12.8	6.6	14.6	-	-
Canada	3.9	2.4	7.9	3.6	5.5	5.8	6.9	8.4	7.0	8.3	11.0	10.8
Denmark	-	-	2.1	1.4	0.8	0.7	6.2	6.9	10.0	10.7	-	-
Finland	-	-	1.8	1.1	2.5	1.0	4.7	4.9	5.2	5.2	6.1	6.0
France	1.3(a)	2.1(a)	-	-	1.4	4.2	4.1	9.8	5.0	10.9	5.6	11.8
Germany	-	-	0.6(d)	0.5(d)	0.5	0.6	2.5	4.5	3.8	5.9	6.0	7.7
Ireland	4.4(b)	3.1(b)	5.7(e)	3.1(e)	6.7	3.1	6.7	4.6	9.5	7.4	-	-
Italy	8.0(a)	11.0(a)	4.0	3.7	3.7	9.4	4.7	12.9	5.3	14.2	6.0	14.7
Japan	1.2(c)	1.5(c)	1.6	1.7	1.2	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.3
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	0.2(f)	0.2(f)	0.4	1.3	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	2.2(a)	0.6(a)	-	-	1.0	0.9	4.3	5.6	7.0	7.5	-	-
New Zealand	-	-	-	-	0.1	0.0	2.0	2.7	3.3	4.6	-	-
Norway	0.7	0.2	-	-	0.8	0.6	1.2	2.4	1.5	2.8	2.3	3.0
Portugal	3.1	1.6	-	-	1.8(g)	2.7(g)	3.9	13.0	-	-	-	-
Spain	1.7	1.3	-	-	2.9	1.4	11.4	14.4	13.8	18.0	15.1	20.3
Sweden	-	-	1.4(h)	2.2(h)	1.4	1.7	1.7	2.3	2.3	2.7	3.0	3.4
Switzerland	0.4	0.5	-	-	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5
United Kingdom	1.3	1.0	1.4	1.1	2.9	0.9	6.6	4.2	10.9	6.0	12.7	7.1
United States	5.0	5.7	5.1	5.9	4.2	5.9	6.8	7.4	7.2	7.9	9.7	9.4

(a) 1954 data.

(b) 1951 data.

(c) 1953 data.

(d) 1962 data.

(e) 1961 data

(f) 1975 data

(g) 1974 data

(h) 1963 data

Source: OECD, Labour Force Statistics.

as the deep structural changes which took place in the Italian economy in recent decades. As in certain other countries, rapid transformation of economic structures put women at a disadvantage vis-à-vis men, because their education and training tended to lag behind new requirements and, in addition, women were handicapped by a lack of mobility in a situation where men followed newly implanted industries or migrated abroad.

Spain has experienced high unemployment rates for both men and women. A plentiful labour supply, spreading recession and large-scale job suppression in former immigration countries resulted in very serious unemployment levels indeed. Unemployment rates for both men and women have reached the highest levels of OECD Member countries.

Published statistics show Belgium as the country with the highest female unemployment rates. This, however, raises a problem of comparability not only of definitions but of the impact of national legislation and in particular of social security rules on unemployment levels. It has been frequently pointed out that differences in social security systems may go a long way in explaining the size of unemployment in individual countries (49). Thus, in Belgium, the duration of unemployment benefits is, in principle, unlimited (although there are a certain number of restrictions). In most other countries there are limits to the payment of unemployment benefits, ranging from 150 days in Switzerland to one year in Germany, Spain and France. (In the latter country the limit exceeds one year for workers over 50.) Qualifying conditions for receiving unemployment benefits are also relatively easier in Belgium than in most other countries (50).

In Australia, female unemployment rates have been rising steadily, with only occasional minor inflections. According to one estimate, hidden unemployment has reached considerable proportions, equalling in size the recorded unemployment (51). As the duration of recorded unemployment started to lengthen and perceptions about employment prospects were becoming more pessimistic, large groups of potential job seekers started to drop out of active job searching.

The categories of labour, or potential labour, most affected by recorded and concealed unemployment were young women and the young in general, married women, recently arrived immigrants, and people over 45. In each of these groups labour market disadvantages associated with sex, age, or lack of English, tended to be reinforced further by lack of formal job qualifications.

In Canada, the unemployment rate has been drifting upward throughout the period considered for both men and women, but the rise has been particularly rapid in the case of women. While their average unemployment rate in 1960 was less than half that of men, the rate in 1981 was 1.2 times as much (52).

In the United States, female unemployment rates have been higher than men's ever since 1950, although data for the second quarter 1982 show them to be about equal. The male unemployment rate has reached a level unprecedented in the post-war period, while the female rate almost equalled the previous post-war high of 1975.

2. REASONS FOR HIGHER FEMALE RATES

i) Behavioural and educational characteristics

The main reason why women's unemployment experiences have overall been worse than men's is clearly the faster growth in the female labour supply. However, other factors have played a part as well. Some of these are related to behavioural characteristics frequently attributed to women workers. It has been claimed, for example, that women spend more time looking for work because they look less intently, having mostly another family member to support them (53). In addition, their search may be handicapped by other constraints, in particular a lower mobility. The distance and time of travel to work, as well as considerations such as the location of the workplace in relation to a child's nursery or school may be important elements in the process of job search. The last point applies more particularly to women caring for young children, who represent a relatively limited proportion of the female labour force.

The lesser mobility argument is, however, an important one since only about one woman worker in five is a head of household and could be expected, in principle, to adapt the choice of residence to the job and not the opposite. The exact impact of lower mobility on the duration of job search needs further investigation, although there is evidence that women usually travel shorter distances to work than men (54). The desire not to lose too much time travelling to and from work certainly limits the choice when looking for new employment.

Some observers have claimed that women, particularly young women, tend to indulge in "career experimentation", trying out various temporary jobs while getting financial support from their family, with the result that they are frequently in-and-out of employment, or even in-and-out of the labour force (55). Although it is true that in EEC countries, for example, 18 per cent of short-term and temporary work is carried out by women under 25 years of age (56), it would be wrong to conclude that young women prefer temporary jobs with frequent interruptions, while receiving unemployment benefits or family support. It seems much more likely that no other alternative is open to them, and that far from being a behavioural characteristic, it shows a lack of choice on their part.

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A behavioural characteristic often attributed to women and which is supposed to lead to higher female unemployment rates is a higher labour turnover. It has been argued recently, however, that what might be interpreted as a behavioural characteristic, may be, in fact, more a job characteristic, a higher percentage of women than of men being forced to accept unstable jobs because, among other factors, of their more frequent entry or re-entry experiences (57). In addition, the basic premise of the argument in certain countries is disproved by facts. In Canada, for instance, data on job tenure show little differences between young men and young women. The Canadian 1981 labour force survey gives in fact an indication of more stability among young women (58).

Education and training characteristics have been often blamed for higher female unemployment rates. Several distinctions have to be made here. As far as the level of education is concerned, a 1980 EEC survey of sex discrimination at work has shown that it was the least educated women, having left school at 14 or 15, who felt least discriminated against in getting a job (59). This would suggest that at present the compulsory education level (corresponding to a low level of pay), is not by itself a factor of greater redundancy.

As far as the level of skill is concerned, it is equally no longer true that unskilled workers, many of whom are women, will be automatically more affected by job loss than skilled workers, as illustrated by the recent example of France (60). The type of education and training most women have seems to be, in a way, a much greater handicap for them. The continuing preference for art subjects at school and for the narrow range of the traditionally "female" occupations at the training stage, limits their employability and puts them at a disadvantage in getting jobs, particularly in periods of economic expansion when restructuring of enterprise activity, accompanied by introduction of new technology, is likely to call for new types of skill, largely of a technical nature.

ii) <u>High share of labour force entrants and re-entrants among women workers</u>

A frequently quoted reason for higher female unemployment rates is that women are more likely to be labour entrants and re-entrants who usually encounter greater difficulties in finding jobs. As women tend to have shorter and more interrupted working careers compared to men, new entrants and re-entrants represent a higher proportion of the female labour force and of female unemployment.

In Canada in 1980, for example, 35 per cent of unemployed women were seeking re-entry to the labour force, double the proportion of unemployed men. Half of these women had been out of the labour force longer than a year (61). In EEC countries in 1979, 30.1 per cent of unemployed women were first-job seekers

compared to 24.5 per cent of unemployed [illegible] 13.4 per cent of unemployed women were re-entrants compared to 7.5 per cent of unemployed men. If all persons looking for work were taken into consideration (those counted as unemployed and the non-actives who said they were looking for work), female re-entrants represented 19 per cent of the total and male re-entrants 7.6 per cent (62). In Sweden, where it was possible to divide the labour force into those already active ten years earlier and those who entered the labour market since then, the unemployment rate of the former group was very low and almost equal for men and women, whereas in the latter group it was several times higher, and the male-female differential was wider (63). At times when the female labour supply is increasing rapidly the share of new entrants in the labour force rises and tends to push up female unemployment rates.

iii) The age factor: youth unemployment

A further explanation of the higher overall female unemployment level is related to the age factor. The average age of the female labour force is lower than that of the male labour force because women tend to retire from activity earlier than men. As a result, workers under 25 represent a higher proportion of the female labour force than of the male (21 per cent compared to 14 per cent in EEC countries in 1979) (64). Since young people have generally much higher unemployment rates than adults, this tends to raise the overall level of female unemployment. Admittedly, female unemployment rates are higher in practically all age groups (see Table XX); but, owing to the difference in weights of individual age groups, total female unemployment rates tend to be pushed up further in comparison with the rates for men. Cyclical unemployment fluctuations affect young men and young women differently. Broadly speaking, young men are more affected than young women at the height of recession, while young women tend to fare less well than young men in recovery periods and in prosperity (65). This pattern corresponds to cyclical fluctuations of total male and female employment, which will be discussed in detail below.

Finally, young people may suffer also from growing labour market rigidities caused by job security legislation which protects primarily older workers, as well as from minimum wage legislation which induces employers to hire more experienced, trained adult workers, who are readily available, when the unemployment rate is high (66). In some cases, though, employers may hire young workers, particularly young women, on a casual or part-time basis because of the relatively low cost involved. This by-passes some of the labour legislation rules, which may be one of the reasons why young women are relatively less affected at the peak of recession than young men.

Table XX

MALE AND FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE

	1973		1979		1981	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Australia						
<20	4.6	4.9	14.7	20.4	11.2	17.1
20-24	2.1	2.5	8.3	8.0	6.4	8.7
25-54	0.8	2.4	2.9	5.1	3.2	4.9
55-64	0.8	1.4	2.7	1.8	3.3	2.2
Canada						
<20	13.5	11.2	16.4	15.8	17.0	15.5
20-24	9.8	6.5	11.1	10.4	12.4	10.0
25-54	4.2	3.6	4.6	7.3	5.0	7.1
55-64	4.7	3.2	4.4	5.0	4.3	4.4
Finland						
<20	7.3	7.1	22.5	19.2	18.5	17.2
20-24	3.3	3.6	10.2	8.5	7.8	7.7
25-54	1.8	1.5	5.0	4.2	3.8	3.3
55-64	2.3	1.6	5.8	6.4	8.5	10.2
65+	1.3	0.3	-	-	-	-
France						
<20	4.1	8.0	13.6	32.9	17.2	42.8
20-24	2.5	4.5	7.6	14.2	9.8	18.0
25-54	1.0	2.5	3.1	5.7	3.5	7.1
55-64	1.9	2.5	2.8	4.8	4.0	6.2
Germany						
<20	0.7	1.4	2.4	5.5	6.4	9.2
20-24	0.6	1.3	2.5	5.2	5.7	8.0
25-54	0.5	1.1	1.6	3.7	3.0	5.5
55-64	1.5	1.3	4.0	5.3	5.2	6.5
Italy						
<20	15.8	15.7	26.5	39.7	28.3	41.9
20-24	10.3	10.7	17.9	24.3	19.4	26.9
25-59	1.5	2.0	1.9	7.1	1.9	7.7
60+	0.7	0.2	2.0	22.0	2.3	6.9
Japan						
<20	3.8	1.8	5.4	2.7	6.8	4.2
20-24	2.2	2.3	3.2	3.5	3.6	5.7
25-54	1.1	1.0	1.7	2.0	1.7	2.0
55-64	2.3	1.4	4.1	1.2	4.0	1.5
Netherlands						
<20	-	-	6.3	7.5	13.1	11.3
25-54	-	-	2.6	2.7	4.9	3.7
55-64	-	-	3.2	2.7	3.9	2.4
Norway						
<20	7.7	11.1	8.8	12.0	8.3	7.1
20-24	3.2	3.8	4.9	4.3	5.8	4.5
25-59	0.4	1.4	0.8	1.6	0.7	2.2
60+	0.7	1.4	0.7	-	0.7	-
Portugal						
<20	-	-	13.3	31.4	9.7	27.6
20-24	-	-	7.8	24.1	6.4	22.0
25-54	-	-	2.4	7.3	1.7	7.6
55-64	-	-	0.3	0.7	1.1	2.1
Spain						
<20	7.4	6.3	28.0	31.5	41.3	48.4
20-24	3.5	3.1	14.9	19.8	24.0	32.4
25-54	1.5	1.2	6.4	5.3	10.0	8.9
55-64	1.5	0.5	5.3	1.4	7.8	2.8
Sweden						
<20	5.8	8.0	7.0	7.9	8.2	10.5
20-24	4.2	4.7	3.6	3.8	4.8	4.6
25-54	.6	2.1	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.9
55-64	2.1	2.3	1.8	2.2	2.2	1.8
65+	3.2	2.0	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom						
<20	4.4	3.0	16.8	16.9	26.2	23.9
20-24	3.7	2.0	7.5	7.5	17.7	15.1
25-54	2.3	0.6	4.2	2.5	9.4	4.9
United States						
<20	12.9	15.2	15.0	16.3	19.0	18.9
20-24	6.5	8.4	8.0	9.5	12.2	11.1
25-54	2.5	4.4	3.3	5.2	5.3	6.3
55-64	2.4	2.8	2.7	3.2	3.6	3.8

Source: Labour Force Statistics, 1970-1981, Part III.

iv) The unemployment of part-time workers

Data available for Australia, Canada and the United States show that in 1981 female part-time workers had somewhat lower unemployment rates than female full-time workers. In Australia and Canada this has been so for a number of years, while in the United States it had not formerly been the case. (In 1981, female full-time and part-time unemployment rates in the United States were equal when all age groups were considered together, but in each age group female part-time workers had a lower unemployment rate than female full-time workers.) On the other hand, male part-timers had generally higher unemployment rates than male full-time workers in the three countries (67).

Similar data are not available for most other countries and estimates are difficult to establish. In Europe, it is mostly impossible to know exactly how many unemployed people there are looking for part-time work. In several countries the only persons to be registered as unemployed are those who previously worked a certain number of hours per week (20 in Germany, 30 in the Netherlands, etc.). Occasional work and work for only short hours is not officially counted as employment. In consequence, wage costs for part-timers working less than the defined number of hours are relatively low, which increases their employability, particularly at a time of recession, but these workers are not entitled to unemployment benefits if they lose their job. On the other hand, unemployed workers who take jobs below the defined number of hours do not lose their unemployment benefit (68). Thus, in a number of Member countries, the dividing line between part-time work and unemployment tends to be blurred and the extent of unemployment among part-time workers is difficult to define.

Statistical series available for France give information on the proportion of unemployed persons, male and female, looking for part-time work (69). According to these data, the percentage of total unemployed seeking part-time work (preferably or exclusively) has been declining in the case of men, and has remained more or less stable in the case of women, although a slightly declining tendency has been also noticeable there. The question arises to what extent this means that unemployment of full-time workers has been growing more than unemployment of part-time workers, or that unemployed persons tended to look increasingly for full-time work, as a result of the recession and of possible job loss by another family member (70).

Whatever the country differences, on the evidence available, the tendency of women to seek part-time work does not seem to be a factor tending to increase female unemployment relative to men.

Part-time work is in many cases an alternative to unemployment, particularly among young people, a number of whom would prefer full-time jobs but are unable to find them in depressed labour market conditions. For example in Australia in

1981, 9 per cent of all male part-time workers and 3 per cent of female part-timers declared that they had actually looked for full-time employment. But in the age group 20-24 this proportion was considerably higher: 14 per cent of the males aged 20-24 had actively looked for full-time work, while 21 per cent would prefer to work more hours, and 12 per cent of female part-timers of the same age had actively looked for full-time work, a further 23 per cent preferring to work more hours (71). Thus a certain proportion of part-time work (the importance of which tends to vary with the business cycle) corresponds to female under-employment, particularly in young age groups.

Whatever the relative importance of the factors of higher female unemployment rates we have examined so far, they tend to be overshadowed by the macro-economic explanation of the phenomenon: female unemployment has increased faster than male unemployment (at least in most countries) because job opportunities for women, although rising faster than job opportunities for men, have not kept pace with the growth of female labour force participation. Economic recession, which has marked the last ten years, has aggravated the situation by reducing aggregate demand and therefore has been largely responsible for it. Paradoxically, however, female labour was relatively less affected by cyclical fluctuations than male labour, and this we will now discuss.

VI

CYCLICAL MOVEMENTS IN MALE AND FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT

1. THE LOWER CYCLICAL SENSITIVITY OF FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT

In Table XXII, the 1970-1982 period has been broken down into seven time segments corresponding to the different phases of the business cycle typical of most OECD countries during these years, i.e. the period of prosperity (1970-1973), the first oil crisis (1973-1975), the recovery years (1975-1978), and the four most recent years (1979, 1980, 1981, 1982).

These data show that total female employment in OECD countries taken as a whole not only increased considerably more than total male employment in all upswing periods, but that it mostly continued to increase in recession years, while male employment declined. (In Europe, in 1981, and according to preliminary data also in 1982, female employment declined, but less than male employment.) Similarly, in recession years, while both male and female unemployment were rising at a fast rate, female unemployment grew relatively less.

Over the decade, male unemployment went through wider fluctuations than female. In recession periods it increased more, but in recovery phases it had mostly a declining trend, contrary to female unemployment, which, typically, continued to rise. Thus women were slightly less affected by unemployment during acute recession periods but had greater difficulties to get out of unemployment during upturn periods, which resulted in a high level of female unemployment in the long run. (There were, of course, some important country differences and these will be discussed later.)

The lower cyclical sensitivity of female unemployment compared to male unemployment can be tested through all cycle phases shown in Table XXII. Invariably, female unemployment increased less at the height of recession, but continued to rise (or declined less than male unemployment) in upswing phases.

Cyclical fluctuations of female employment and unemployment were relatively more important in North America than in

Europe, in the long run, where unemployment increased more. This suggests that female unemployment is more of a structural problem in Europe than in North America. While female unemployment went up more in North America than in Europe in certain recession years, it reacted better in recovery periods and eventually the North American labour market was able to absorb a much larger share of the increasing female labour supply than was the case in Europe. Here, the relatively important increase of female (but also of male) unemployment during prosperity and recovery years may be in some ways a greater cause for concern than the short-term cyclical fluctuations, as it indicates the largely structural nature of the phenomenon.

The differential impact of the business cycle on the male and female workforce is obviously related to the sectoral distribution of male and female employment which we have already discussed. The concentration of women in services has given them a certain advantage over men in recent periods of recession, as the service sector tends to be less sensitive to cyclical changes in the short run than the manufacturing or construction sectors, where a large proportion of workers are men.

Moreover, the large share of women in public sector employment had also an anticyclical effect. The countercyclical role of public sector employment has been noted by a number of authors recently (72). In the words of Irene Bruegel, "The favourable industrial distribution of women has cushioned them against the worst effects of crisis" (73). Thus it appears that occupational segregation was a factor that protected a certain proportion of the female labour force at the peak of recession, but was detrimental to them mainly in periods of recovery and prosperity.

Another factor explaining why women seem less affected in peak recession periods is the importance of part-time work in female employment. Part-time employment appears, in general, to be less responsive to business fluctuations than full-time employment. This has been shown in a number of recent studies (74). The flexibility and low cost of part-time labour seem to be among the main reasons for it.

It should be stressed that a smaller overall rate of fluctuation of part-time employment does not mean than an individual part-time worker has on the average a more secure employment than a full-timer. On the contrary, it seems that the deepening of the recession was accompanied by a rising job mobility, as job suppression continued and workers tended to pass from regular, full-time employment into less stable, often part-time, jobs, which in turn were becoming more insecure as business conditions worsened. This was true particularly in countries where part-time employment played a certain buffer role in recent years, such as France (75).

Although women as a whole are less affected by unemployment than men in the depth of recessions, as already stated,

women were more affected by unemployment in the long run, their position vis-à-vis men worsening particularly in the recovery periods. While the long-run worsening is due to structural factors (as we have just shown), cyclical factors may be operating in favour of men during recovery periods. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, the service sector is also likely to become affected by recession, although with a certain time lag. Even in the branches where employment continues to rise, the increase is likely to be smaller than it would have been in the absence of recession. This affects adversely the employment situation of women at a later stage than the male situation. Secondly, during recovery periods, the male labour force is more easily re-hired, because: (a) industrial production picks up again, which creates employment opportunities for men; (b) other things being equal, many employers prefer men to women, which means that -- while normal job turnover continues and new employment is created -- women are likely to succeed less well than men in competing for jobs; (c) women's generally narrow range of skills and lower geographical mobility are further handicaps to them.

Women are less likely than men to find employment in new activities created in upswing periods that tend to require a level of technical knowledge and training more frequently possessed by men. As organisational changes and modernisation are more likely to occur in periods of prosperity and in post-crisis periods of rationalisation and productivity increase, a certain section of female labour may find it difficult to compete for jobs particularly at these moments. (This does not imply, however, that all categories of female workers will experience similar difficulties, as illustrated by the relatively good performance of some women in the process of office modernisation in the computer field.) However, the lower cyclical elasticity of employment in most of the sectors where women predominate, and their difficulty in overcoming the constraints of occupational segregation, are detrimental to them, particularly in upturn periods, while they protect a large proportion of them in times of recession.

Upturn periods are likely to offer greater incentives for industrial relocation, and this is another factor detrimental to female employment. Women, particularly married women, have a lower degree of geographical mobility than men. In the case of newly established plants or service activities, where part of the labour force moves to a new location, families will move to suit the higher income earner, usually the husband, while the wife may have difficulty in finding an adequate job. Demand for labour in the new place may be low in her range of skills and, if she is looking for relatively unskilled (service) employment, she may have difficulty in competing with the local labour force.

Another thing is that, if the husband migrates abroad, the wife may have to stay behind at least for a while, either for personal reasons or because of immigration restrictions in

receiving countries. In her country of origin, while waiting to join her husband abroad, she is more likely to be unemployed than in the country of immigration, at least in prosperity periods. (In downturn phases, immigrant labour is likely to be more severely affected than nationals because of a lack of adequate training and difficulties with a new language.)

2. CYCLICAL LABOUR MARKET FLUCTUATIONS IN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

The lower cyclical sensitivity of female employment and unemployment can be tested through recent experiences in individual OECD countries. Net changes of the male and female labour force, employment and unemployment in 16 Member countries in different cycle periods are summarised in Table XXII. The data illustrate that in most countries at most periods: (i) the increase of female labour was higher than the increase of male labour in both absolute and relative terms; (ii) the labour market absorbed usually a greater (or equal) number of female workers than of male workers and female employment increased more than male; and (iii) female unemployment increased faster (or decreased less) than male unemployment, in absolute and in relative terms, in periods of cyclical upturn, but increased less than male unemployment at the height of recession.

A further illustration of the pattern of male and female unemployment fluctuations in individual OECD countries in recent downturn and upturn periods is provided in Table XXIII. The statistical series presented there confirm that in the majority of countries women were relatively less affected by unemployment during acute recession periods (1974-1975 and 1980-1981) than during other periods. Table XXI offers a summary view of whether women were more (+) or less (-) affected by unemployment than men during the various cyclical phases.

Between 1973 and 1975 female unemployment increased less than male -- in both absolute and relative terms -- in 10 countries out of 18. In three others, the female contribution to the net absolute change was smaller, while the percentage rate of increase was greater than in the case of men. Only in two countries out of 18, namely Belgium and Italy, female unemployment increased more than male unemployment and in one, Sweden, it decreased less. In one country, Finland, changes in both male and female unemployment were nil. However, in the last two countries, 1974 and 1975 were not recession years. When a downturn occurred in 1977-78, female unemployment increased less than male in both Finland and Sweden. In 1981, which was a recession year in most countries, female unemployment increased more than male in only five countries out of 18.

During upturn periods, however (i.e. during the pre-crisis prosperity years and during the 1975-79 recovery years), women were more affected by unemployment than men. In 1979 women fared

Table XXI

RELATION OF CHANGES IN FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS TO CHANGES IN MALE UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS, 1970-1981

Country	1970-73	1973-75	1975-78	1979	1980	1981
Australia	-	-	-	+	+	+
Austria	+	-	-	-	+	-
Belgium	+	+	+	+	+	-
Canada	+	+/-	+/-	+	-	+
Denmark	+	-	+	+	-	-
Finland	+	0	-	+	+	-
France	+	-	+	+	+	-
Germany	+	-	+	+	-	-
Italy	+	+	+	+	+	-/+
Japan	-	-	+/-	+	+	-
Netherlands	+/-	+/-	+	+	-	-
Norway	+	-	+	-	+	+
Portugal			+	+	+	-
Spain	+/-	-	+/-	-	+/-	+/-
Sweden	+/-	+	-	+	+	-
Switzerland		-	+	+	-	+
United Kingdom	+	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	-
United States	+	-	+	-	-	+

\+ Female unemployment increased more (or declined less) than male unemployment

\- Female unemployment increased less (or declined more) than male unemployment

Double signs correspond to relative and absolute change, in that order.

Source: OECD, Labour Force Statistics IV, 81.

worse than men in terms of unemployment changes in 14 OECD countries out of 18.

In 1980, out of the 22 OECD countries for which information was available, nine had a higher total number of unemployed women than of unemployed men, namely Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal and Sweden. In 1981, with the deepening of the recession in Europe, there were only five such countries -- Belgium, France, Italy, Norway and Portugal -- male unemployment having increased sharply and exceeded female unemployment in all the others.

Table XXII

NET CHANGES IN MAIN LABOUR MARKET AGGREGATES BY SEX, 1970-1982

(In percentages)

Country	1970-73		1973-75		1975-78		1979		1980		1981		1982	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Australia														
labour force	5.2	11.7	1.6	8.1	2.4	7.0	1.1	0.2	1.8	4.7	1.5	1.8	1.4	2.0
employment	4.9	11.2	- 0.6	4.0	0.3	5.8	1.9	0.0	1.8	5.0	1.8	2.3	-0.2	0.9
unemployment	37.8	31.0	172.5	154.5	59.7	24.3	-11.7	2.3	1.4	1.6	-3.8	-3.7	34.5	16.3
Austria														
labour force	1.5	1.3	- 1.4	- 1.8	2.3	3.6	1.2	1.3	0.6	0.0	1.1	1.7	4.6	3.6
employment	1.9	0.3	- 2.2	- 2.3	2.1	3.0	1.3	1.0	0.9	0.3	0.5	0.9	3.6	2.5
unemployment	-40.0	- 4.5	116.7	23.8	15.4	30.8	- 6.7	8.8	-14.3	-8.1	50.0	29.4	55.6	34.1
Belgium														
labour force	0.3	7.3	0.7	4.6	- 0.9	7.3	0.6	3.0	- 0.5	1.8	-0.5	1.6		
employment	0.1	6.4	- 0.7	1.1	- 2.0	1.2	0.6	2.3	- 0.8	1.0	-2.8	-0.5		
unemployment	12.2	46.4	78.1	112.2	33.3	96.6	- 0.9	8.2	- 5.6	7.0	50.4	15.7		
Canada														
labour force	6.9	17.0	5.3	11.4	5.8	15.0	2.2	4.2	1.6	4.6	1.6	4.3	-0.3	1.5
employment	7.6	15.9	3.9	9.7	4.1	13.2	1.2	3.2	1.3	5.0	1.4	4.4	-4.6	-1.2
unemployment	- 5.4	34.1	32.5	35.9	28.4	47.6	-10.0	-5.4	6.0	0.5	3.8	3.4	55.9	32.2
Denmark														
labour force	- 0.5	8.1	0.6	3.1	4.5	13.4	- 2.2	1.0	- 0.1	2.7	0.0	1.2		
employment	- 0.4	7.6	- 3.5	- 1.0	3.6	9.6	- 0.3	2.4	- 2.2	4.3	-4.1	-2.9		
unemployment	- 9.1	83.3	590.0	372.7	23.2	84.6	-32.9	-6.3	48.6	-14.7	61.7	56.6		
Finland														
labour force	- 0.5	5.8	1.3	4.0	- 0.6	- 0.8	0.2	1.7	1.2	2.3	1.8	2.8	1.7	3.4
employment	- 0.5	4.6	1.3	4.1	- 6.7	- 5.0	2.4	2.4	3.0	3.2	1.3	2.5	0.7	2.4
unemployment	- 8.5	120.0	0	0	255.2	200.0	-23.3	-9.1	-25.3	-11.7	13.6	9.4	19.4	20.7
France														
labour force	1.7	4.9	- 0.6	4.0	1.6	5.8	- 0.1	2.1	0.1	0.9	-0.2	1.3	0.7	0.3
employment	1.1	4.5	- 1.9	2.2	0.8	3.9	- 0.7	1.0	0.0	0.0	-1.2	0.0	0.1	-0.7
unemployment	10.4	14.5	82.6	41.3	28.0	33.5	14.1	14.9	2.5	10.4	22.2	13.1	12.7	8.5
Germany														
labour force	- 0.5	2.3	- 3.2	- 0.4	- 1.4	0.6	0.4	1.6	0.6	1.8	0.4	1.3	0.2	0.7
employment	- 0.6	1.6	- 5.0	- 3.8	- 0.7	0.1	0.9	2.2	0.5	1.8	-1.0	-0.2	-2.1	-1.2
unemployment	61.4	120.8	315.2	264.5	-21.5	11.6	-14.7	-8.9	2.2	0.7	53.1	34.0	56.6	31.2
Italy														
labour force	- 0.7	2.6	1.0	4.1	0.7	10.8	0.6	3.8	0.6	2.8	0.8	2.3	0.2	0.8
employment	- 1.2	0.4	- 1.1	2.2	- 0.2	8.0	0.3	2.9	0.8	3.0	0.2	0.8	-0.6	0.3
unemployment	11.0	23.6	- 7.6	- 4.1	23.8	31.0	5.6	10.0	- 1.9	1.4	12.8	12.4	13.7	4.1
Japan														
labour force	4.8	1.1	1.7	- 2.9	2.1	6.9	0.9	1.6	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.1	0.7	1.9
employment	4.7	1.0	1.1	- 3.5	1.7	4.6	1.1	1.7	0.9	1.2	0.7	0.9	0.6	1.8
unemployment	15.8	14.3	50.0	41.7	22.7	26.5	- 8.6	0.0	- 4.1	0.0	11.3	9.3	6.3	10.6
Netherlands														
labour force									2.0	5.2	1.4	4.6		
employment			0.7	1.2	2.1	5.0	0.7	3.0	1.3	4.8	-1.4	2.5		
unemployment	44.4	175.0	73.9	9.9	-11.1	64.3	- 2.9	13.0	21.2	12.8	63.7	39.8		
Norway														
labour force			2.5	6.5	4.0	14.8	- 0.2	3.0	1.3	3.1	0.5	2.2	0.6	2.5
employment			1.6	6.0	4.5	15.4	- 0.4	3.0	1.7	3.1	0.2	1.8	-0.2	2.3
unemployment			90.9	28.7	-73.8	- 5.3	12.5	5.6	-24.0	3.1	25.6	19.3	56.8	8.6
Spain														
labour force	0.2	18.3	1.7	- 1.3	- 3.6	7.0	- 0.3	0.5	- 0.3	- 0.5	0.4	0.4	-0.1	5.0
employment	- 0.8	17.9	- 1.4	- 2.9	- 6.4	0.9	- 2.3	-1.7						
unemployment	38.9	284.0	71.4	60.4	52.4	144.8	24.2	21.2	30.7	32.7	21.6	25.5	9.3	18.7
Sweden														
labour force	- 0.8	5.4	1.1	7.8	- 1.1	6.1	0.6	2.5	0.3	2.2	-1.1	2.1	0.0	1.2
employment	- 1.7	4.2	2.0	8.7	- 1.9	5.7	0.8	2.6	0.5	2.2	-1.7	1.7	-0.7	0.5
unemployment	62.5	70.4	-38.5	-21.7	53.1	5.0	-10.2	-2.2	- 9.1	2.3	37.5	17.8	27.3	28.3
United Kingdom														
labour force	- 1.8	4.9	- 0.4	3.9	0.5	4.7	- 0.6	1.4	0.3	0.9	0.0	-1.4	-1.3	-0.3
employment	- 1.3	4.8	- 1.8	3.2	- 1.5	2.0	0.0	1.5	- 0.9	0.0	-4.7	-3.3	-3.3	-1.5
unemployment	1.7	15.0	46.4	72.8	44.7	66.0	- 9.1	-2.1	20.7	27.5	65.6	40.6	15.1	17.3
United States														
labour force	2.9	9.5	2.2	7.3	4.9	13.3	1.5	3.6	1.2	2.9	0.9	2.7	0.8	2.3
employment	4.1	9.4	- 1.7	3.5	7.8	16.0	1.7	4.1	- 0.7	2.2	0.4	2.1	-1.9	0.6
unemployment	0.2	11.4	95.8	66.9	-30.4	-13.0	- 1.1	-1.7	36.8	11.7	7.3	9.7	33.0	21.7

Source: OECD, Labour Force Statistics 1970-1981, Paris, 1983.

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Table XXIII

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MALES AND FEMALES TO NET UNEMPLOYMENT CHANGES, 1970-82

Country	1970-73	1973-75	1975-78	1979	1980	1981	1982
Australia							
Total	34.2	183.2	41.9	- 5.6	1.3	- 3.7	25.6
Men	37.8	172.5	59.7	- 11.7	1.4	- 3.8	34.5
Women	31.0	154.5	24.3	2.3	1.6	- 3.7	16.3
Austria							
Total	- 21.4	60.5	20.8	1.6	- 10.8	37.9	43.8
Men	- 35.0	100.0	15.4	- 6.7	- 14.3	50.0	55.6
Women	- 9.1	35.0	29.9	8.8	- 8.1	29.4	34.1
Belgium							
Total	26.1	93.1	66.1	4.7	6.5	28.3	
Men	12.2	76.1	33.3	- 0.9	5.6	50.4	
Women	46.4	112.2	96.6	8.2	7.0	15.7	
Canada							
Total	8.2	34.0	31.9	- 7.9	3.5	3.6	45.3
Men	- 5.4	32.6	22.1	- 10.0	6.0	3.8	55.9
Women	34.1	35.9	36.5	- 5.4	0.5	3.4	32.2
Denmark							
Total	23.5	476.2	49.6	- 23.2	10.3	59.3	
Men	- 9.1	590.0	23.2	- 32.9	48.6	61.7	
Women	83.3	372.7	84.6	- 14.6	- 14.7	56.6	
Finland							
Total	24.4	0.0	231.3	- 17.8	- 19.4	11.6	20.0
Men	- 6.5	0.0	255.2	- 23.3	- 25.3	13.6	19.4
Women	120.0	0.0	200.0	- 9.1	- 11.7	9.4	20.7
France							
Total	12.9	56.6	31.2	14.5	7.2	16.7	10.3
Men	10.4	82.6	28.0	14.1	2.5	22.2	12.7
Women	14.5	47.3	33.5	14.9	10.4	13.1	8.5
Germany							
Total	83.7	292.8	- 7.6	- 11.8	1.5	43.1	44.1
Men	61.4	315.2	- 21.5	- 14.7	2.2	53.1	56.6
Women	120.8	265.5	11.6	- 8.9	0.7	34.0	31.2
Italy							
Total	17.5	- 5.7	27.7	8.1	0.0	12.7	8.1
Men	11.0	- 7.6	23.8	5.6	- 1.9	12.8	13.7
Women	23.3	- 4.1	31.0	10.0	1.4	12.4	4.1
Japan							
Total	15.3	47.1	24.0	- 5.6	- 2.6	10.5	7.9
Men	15.8	50.0	22.7	- 8.6	- 4.1	11.3	6.3
Women	14.3	41.7	26.5	0.0	0.0	9.3	10.6
Netherlands							
Total	146.7	77.3	5.1	2.4	18.1	55.2	
Men	144.4	73.9	- 11.1	- 2.9	21.2	63.7	
Women	175.0	90.9	64.3	13.0	12.8	39.8	
Norway							
Total	116.7	53.8	- 15.0	8.8	- 10.2	21.9	29.2
Men	22.2	90.9	- 23.8	12.5	- 24.0	25.6	56.8
Women	400.0	26.7	- 5.3	5.6	- 3.1	19.3	8.6
Portugal							
Total					- 4.1		
Men					- 16.4		
Women					2.7		
Spain							
Total	89.1	71.2	75.2	23.2	n.a.	22.9	12.5
Men	58.9	76.4	52.4	24.2	n.a.	21.6	9.3
Women	292.0	57.1	144.8	21.2	n.a.	25.5	18.7
Sweden							
Total	66.1	- 30.6	38.2	- 6.4	- 2.3	25.6	26.9
Men	62.5	- 38.5	53.1	- 10.2	- 9.1	37.5	27.3
Women	70.4	- 21.7	25.0	- 2.2	2.3	17.8	28.3
Switzerland							
Total			10.0	- 9.1		6.5	
Men			- 12.5	- 28.6			
Women			100.0	25.0		4.3	
United Kingdom							
Total	3.6	50.6	67.0	- 7.1	22.5	58.3	15.7
Men	1.7	46.4	44.7	- 9.1	20.7	65.6	15.1
Women	- 15.0	72.8	166.0	- 2.1	27.5	40.6	17.3
United States							
Total	5.3	81.9	- 22.8	- 1.4	24.4	8.3	25.1
Men	0.2	35.8	- 30.4	- 1.1	36.8	7.3	33.0
Women	11.4	66.9	- 13.0	- 1.7	11.7	9.1	21.7

Source: OECD, Labour Force Statistics, 1970-1981, Paris 1983; and Secretariat estimates.

3. UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE FAMILY SITUATION

A more important consideration than whether women or men suffered less from unemployment, when judging its total impact, is how it affected families -- one-person households are a small minority. The household is the basic unit for expenditure decisions in function of combined family income; the loss of job of one of its members affects the whole family, although to varying degrees, depending on the unemployed person's position and on the number of earning and non-earning members in the family.

To some extent the amount of hardship caused by the present high level of unemployment may have been mitigated by the fact that a large proportion of the unemployed were teenagers and young adults living with their families, or were married women. However, the intra-family division of labour has been transformed in recent decades and so has the pattern of household expenditure -- matching the contemporary way of life. Because of the increasing "monetization" or "socialisation" of the household economy (76), the structure of family consumption and the pattern of household expenditure have become adjusted to family income deriving frequently from two (or more) sources. As pointed out by Bettina Cass, at present "the best guarantee against poverty is the presence of two adult full-time income earners in the income unit" (77).

Admittedly, unemployment tabulations by family status show single people, particularly in the young age groups, as having by far the highest unemployment rates, and many of these live with their families. It may seem that the loss of a job by a teenager is a relatively small burden for the family, given the generally low contribution of his or her earnings to total family income. This may be true in some cases, but in many others it may cause hardship, particularly in low-income families, where the relative contribution of the young person's pay to family income is likely to be greater.

In many countries the average contribution of the wife's earnings to total family income has been increasing in recent years. But even in those where it has not, as in the United States, it has come to be regarded as an important component of the household income. The loss of the wife's pay may thus seriously affect the family's standard of living, particularly if housing, for example, takes up a relatively large share of total expenditure, or if the family has obligations such as hire purchase repayments. Regardless of the way the family considers the wife's earnings, their loss may be serious. In Canada, data for 1975 show that 51 per cent more two-spouse families would have fallen below the poverty line if wives had not worked outside the home (78).

Two (or more) pay packets in a family represent an insurance against total loss of family earnings through unemployment -- something particularly welcome in times of recession. The

issue is, however, somewhat complex. If the husband's and wife's probabilities of becoming unemployed were entirely independent of each other, the chances of both being out of work would be indeed very small (corresponding to the product of the two rates). However, experience shows that they are not independent. A concentration of unemployment in certain families exists in all countries for which data are available.

United States data, for example, indicate that wives of unemployed husbands have above-average unemployment rates, just as husbands of unemployed wives have particularly high unemployment records (79). In Australia in 1980, wives of unemployed men were more than six times as likely to be unemployed and one-third as likely to be employed, compared with the wives of employed men (80). This is largely due to sectoral and geographical factors. In families residing in economically depressed areas, all members are more likely to become unemployed than in areas having a higher level of activity. Moreover, the high incidence of unemployment in manufacturing when recession sets in is likely to affect particularly industrial (manual) workers who are frequently found together in the same family. The "poverty trap" should also be remembered in this context. In low-income groups, social security provisions and taxation rules in some countries make it uninteresting for family members of the unemployed to have paid employment. This, clearly, tends to lengthen their unemployment experience.

In multiworker families, on the other hand, chances that at least one of the members will be unemployed increase. If the husband's and the wife's earnings are both important components of family income, the likelihood that the family will suffer some degree of hardship through unemployment is, of course, greater.

The incidence of unemployment tends to vary also by type of family. Single-parent families, especially families maintained by women, are usually more affected by unemployment than husband/wife families. Divorced, separated and widowed women have higher unemployment rates than married women or single adult women. In addition, in the countries for which data are available, relatives living in single-parent families have higher unemployment rates than husband/wife family members. As single-parent families generally belong to low-income categories (even in the absence of unemployment), an association emerges between the incidence of unemployment and the level of household income. In a way, unemployment "makes the poor poorer by selecting out low-income households" (81).

Married couple families have been relatively more sheltered against unemployment than other types of household. Husbands have lower unemployment rates than males living alone or heads of single-parent families. As far as available data show, working wives have lower unemployment rates than women in other family situations, with the exception of adult women living alone.

The following data express the weight of different family categories in the total female labour force and their respective unemployment rates in the United States in August 1981.

	Share of female labour force	Unemployment rate
Total female labour force	100.0	8.0
Wives	52.3	6.0
Women maintaining families	11.7	10.5
Women living alone	10.5	4.9
Others	25.5	12.5

Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, September 1981, Table A-9.

The 25.5 per cent of the female labour force belonging to the "other" category, which has the highest unemployment rates, can be broken down as follows. About 60 per cent are girls under 25 living in families, who have high unemployment rates caused by their age. About one-quarter of these live in single-parent households, where their joblessness is likely to cause even more of a problem than in the case of daughters in husband-wife families. Another 20 per cent of the "other" category are adult relatives living in families whose unemployment is also relatively high, but its impact varies from case to case. The remainder, or about 5 per cent of the total female labour force, belong to the unspecified residual, with an unemployment rate slightly above the female average.

In summary, the increase in economic activity of married women and their important contribution to family income represent, on the one hand, a protection against total (or major) loss of family earnings through unemployment. On the other hand, multiworker families -- who are increasingly becoming the norm in OECD countries -- have a higher theoretical probability that one of their members will be unemployed. In the absence of social security cover this may lead to hardships, particularly if the household was used to the previous income level and its income closely matched a fixed level of expenditure.

VII

CONCLUSION

The present number of women in OECD countries who are counted as unemployed -- over twelve million in 1982 -- is unprecedented and naturally causes considerable concern in all countries. The size of such unemployment is a product of two factors. First, the general recession which all industrialised countries are undergoing and which causes high, across-the-board unemployment from which women are not exempt. In fact, while twenty years ago female unemployment rates equalled those of men, at present these rates are markedly higher than men's.

From these figures it might be argued that the recession is hitting women more than men. This, however, would be to ignore the second factor responsible for the unprecedentedly high number of unemployed women, namely the equally unprecedented influx of women into the labour market. This is a phenomenon of major economic importance, and of great relevance in our present discussion. Unlike the prevailing economic recession, which is bound to end sooner or later, the increased female labour force participation is something that is certain to stay. In the matter of female unemployment, the advancing female conquest of their share of the labour market is a longer-term issue of economic and social policy than the current stagflation.

Because of the importance of this phenomenon the problem of rapidly increasing female participation rates has been examined at some length in this study. Over the last thirty years (1950-1980) the number of economically active men increased by 25 per cent and of women by 74 per cent. In absolute terms, the increase of the female labour force was already higher than that of the male labour force in the 1950s, and the story was repeated in the 1960s. The period of the 1970s, in spite of the beginning of the recession, was the peak of the influx of women into the labour market. While the male labour force increased in the 1970s by 16 million men, female labour force increased by more than 27 million women. Viewed from this perspective, the increase of the female unemployment rate from 2.8 per cent in 1960 to 7.5 per cent in 1981 (compared with an increase from 2.8 to 6.1 per cent in male unemployment rate) would not indicate that women fared much worse than men in the recession. This, however, is no consolation, because both male

and female unemployment was very high, and its combined effect on families extremely serious.

Given the impact of the fast increasing female labour force participation on women's unemployment at a time of low aggregate demand for labour, and accepting that the high female labour force participation is a phenomenon which is almost certain to last, it is important to examine the nature of the increase in such participation.

The first thing to notice is the age pattern of the increase in female participation rates. The increase has been confined to the age group of 20 to 54 years and was in many countries particularly pronounced in the span of 35 to 44 year olds. At the same time participation rates of women below 20 and above 54 were falling in most countries. This indicates that the increase in female participation was due to many women staying in the labour market without interruption, particularly those belonging to younger generations, and to women in middle age groups re-entering the labour market after having children. This is further confirmed by the particularly marked increase of labour force participation of married women, including those with children.

The extent of female labour force participation could, however, be overestimated, if it were not kept in mind that an important feature of such participation is part-time work. In OECD countries about one-fifth to one-half of female employment consists of part-timers. In general, countries with high female participation rates have also relatively high percentages of women working part-time, which indicates that on a comparable full-time basis the differences in female participation rates between countries are smaller than data indicate.

The factors behind the massive influx of women into the labour market are, broadly, of four different kinds: demographic, educational, economic and social. First, let us consider the demographic ones. The "baby-boom" of the 1950s and early 1960s which has been reflected in the growing number of new entrants to the labour market affected, of course, men and women equally; although to the extent that boys stayed longer in school, it worked in the direction of women of that generation entering the labour market on average earlier. But the real demographic force behind the increased female participation in the labour force was the new pattern of parenthood. The spread of effective birth control enabled women to plan their motherhood differently, and to combine childbirth and career, whereas previously their careers were subordinate to, and randomly affected by, motherhood. In particular, the growing concentration of births to mothers under 30 years of age, coupled with reasonable certainty of no further births, opened the door for married women to work during their middle age. This explains the particularly sharp increase in participation rates of married women over 35 with children.

As to the educational factors, there is a strong association between the level attained and labour force participation in all countries, although there are inter-country differences at each level, caused by the other factors determining the rate of participation. But everywhere, as their level of education kept increasing, so did the number of women entering the labour force. Thus, expansion of education has been a factor directly contributing to increased female labour force participation.

The economic factors are reflected in the growing availability of goods and services which reduce the necessary household work and free women to have at least a part-time job. This process, which is basically related to the growing wealth of society, is reinforced by the substitution of market-bought for home-produced goods and services, which become too time-intensive. At the same time, with growing opportunities of work outside the home and with rising female wages, the opportunity cost of being a housewife increases sharply.

Finally, there are the factors of a social nature: the rise of female consciousness coming from better education, the desire to earn their own income and the independence it confers, the low social status of being "just a housewife". In addition, when more and more women enter the labour force for various reasons, it becomes in a certain sense a handicap to stay outside, social contacts being easier in a job than outside it.

When the long-term increase in the labour force participation of women was confronted with a new phenomenon, the post-1973 recession in industrialised countries, the question arose as to how it would affect women; for their participation rates had increased much more in the 1970s than in the previous decade. While the depression was going on, large numbers of women were entering the labour market. During the recession they found jobs more easily than men -- the labour market usually absorbed a greater number of women than of men, and female employment increased more than male employment. However, the absorption capacity of the labour market was insufficient, given the increase of female labour force, with the result that female unemployment rose more than male unemployment, at least in the long run, if not at the height of recession.

As well as examining the participation-employment-unemployment relationship in the last two decades, our study has analysed the relationship between the main labour market aggregates in short periods corresponding to the cyclical movements typical of most OECD countries in the 1970s. It has shown that in the periods of acute recession, 1974-1975 and 1980-1982, female unemployment generally increased less than male unemployment, while in the pre-recession period, 1970-1973, and during temporary recoveries, 1975-1979, female unemployment increased more (or decreased less) than male unemployment.

The explanation of this phenomenon is to be sought in the different sectoral distribution of male and female labour. As

women are much more concentrated in the service sector (particularly in the public sphere) where the impact of recession is smaller and delayed, they are less affected by the slump than men who are predominant in more cyclically affected sectors, such as construction and manufacturing. However, while women suffer less by unemployment during the periods of acute crisis, they fare much worse than men during the period of immediate recovery. This phenomenon is responsible for the relatively higher increase in female unemployment during the late 1970s and early 1980s, together with the fact that before 1974 even female unemployment rates were already higher than male rates in more than half of the OECD countries.

The structure of unemployment shows a definite age pattern. In all OECD countries without exception, young people have been affected by unemployment more severely than adult workers. Among the young, girls have been harder hit than boys. Their presumed lower commitment to a working career, and their expected retirement from the labour force on the birth of children, their lack of adequate qualifications and training, as well as their high rate of job turnover, all work against them.

Finally, the structure of unemployment shows also a pattern that accords with marital status and family situation. Married women have generally lower unemployment rates than the non-married, and husband/wife families fare generally better than people in other family situations.

Female unemployment is likely to remain a problem even after the present recession ends. Economic structures and institutions will have to become fully adapted to the new situation of a much higher female labour force participation than was the case in the past, although the expansion rate of the total female labour force observed in the 1970s will slow down, as new, less numerous generations accede to the labour market.

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Annex

Table A-I

COEFFICIENTS OF RANK CORRELATION BETWEEN
THE RATE OF EMPLOYMENT GROWTH
OF A SECTOR, 1973-1981,
AND THE SHARE OF WOMEN IN BASE YEAR

Country	Coefficient of rank correlation	Significance level in per cent
Canada	0.7619	5
United States	0.8572	1
Japan	0.9286	1
Australia	0.7857	5
New Zealand	0.9524	1
Austria	0.8572	1
Belgium	0.6429	5
Denmark	0.2857	-
Finland	0.5238	-
Germany	0.2619	-
Netherlands	0.6667	5
Norway	0.8286	5
Portugal	0.4048	-
Spain	0.2143	-
Sweden	0.7620	5
United Kingdom	0.2381	-

Source: ILO, Bulletin of Labour Statistics, various issues.

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